Michael Sadleir

Mrs. Hustlethwayte.

T. Thistlethwayte. Esqre

Southfield Park. 1850.

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COUNTRY QUARTERS;

A NOVEL.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

WITH A MEMOIR

BY HER NIECE, MISS POWER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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COUNTRY QUARTERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE day passed over without Mordant seeing or hearing from Herbert Vernon; and, when he went to the mess to dine, his friend did not appear there. Whether his absence was to be taken as a favourable omen or not, Mordant could not decide; but his fears whispered that, "Perhaps Vernon, as an accepted lover, had been engaged to dine by the Countess O'Neill." The pain this supposition occasioned convinced him that his heart was still far from being in a state to look on the happiness of Vernon with the indifference into which he thought he had schooled it to bear the success of his friend.

"Where *is* Vernon?" demanded more than one of his brother officers; an inquiry that elicited the information that the missing gentleman had ordered some mutton broth to his room. What a transition did this intelligence create in Mordant's feelings! It revealed the whole history of Vernon's blighted hopes, and, as he pictured him to his mind in the solitude of his room, too sad and depressed to meet the eyes of his brother officers, he felt all his friendship for him revive, and the deepest sympathy take the place of the envy which, in spite of his better feelings, had previously taken possession of him.

Herbert Vernon, the accepted, the happy suitor of the lovely Grace O'Neill, seated at table, *en famille*, with her and her grandmother, was too enviable a man to be thought of by Mordant without bitterness; but, as the solitary occupant of a barrack-room, self-condemned to the insipid regimen of mutton broth and dry toast, furnishing a proof presumptive, if not a protest, for seclusion on the plea of indisposition, was viewed in a very different spirit, and Mordant's heart softened towards his friend as he thus pic-

tured him. "I will not, however, break in unbidden on his solitude," thought he; "I will wait until he sends for, or writes to me. I will betray no impatience to learn the result of his suit, although I cannot help feeling much. Yet, why should I thus feel? What can it be to *me?* To accept Herbert Vernon's most generous offer would be impossible in any case less urgent than the peace of her who is dearer to me than aught else in life, and I am not so vain as to believe that I have endangered her happiness."

While these reflections were passing in the mind of Mordant, a conversation was going on between the members of the mess-table.

"You have heard the commotion that Hunter has caused in the town?" observed one of the officers.

"Come, come, don't make mountains of molehills," replied Hunter, looking half angry, yet deprecating the renewal of a subject that was evidently disagreeable to him.

"Oh, a capital scene, wasn't it?" remarked another. "Only fancy the picturesque group that presented itself to the Colonel this day

outside the barrack-gate, into which the sentinels, with some difficulty, precluded them from entering."

"I wish you'd drop the subject; I have had quite enough of it," said Hunter, angrily.

"It would be unkind to deprive Mordant of the pleasure we all so much enjoyed," added his tormentor. "Fancy, Mordant, about a dozen mothers, unkempt, and with a total disregard to cleanliness in their costume, apparently as disinclined to a contact with water as a man in a state of hydrophobia, beseeching, or rather besieging, our Colonel in every possible tone of brogue, from the Kerry to the Munster, to protect their hopeful sons from the *largesse* of the rich Misther Hunter. 'Och, sir, shure he'll entirely destroy them,' exclaimed one. 'Won't he be the death of 'em? God forgive him,' cried another. 'And isn't five of the poor crathurs raving mad in their sick beds at this blessed moment?' said a third. 'Didn't he make 'em run races till he knocked the breath out of their bodies, and then, when they stood panting, and the sweat—saving your honour's favour—running down over them like a shower of rain over a basket of

kidney pratoes, didn't he make 'em jump right into the river to swim against each other for wagers ?'

" ' And didn't he,' interrupted another speaker, throwing up her bony arms to Heaven, as if to implore its vengeance, ' didn't he give 'em enough halfpence to keep six dacent families in food for a month, to spend in whisky ?' ' And is it a wondher they are in their beds raving mad in a raging fever, the poor crathurs ? And we, the poor mothers that bore 'em, that suckled 'em, to be kept from our hard work, by which we can only earn enough to keep life and soul together, to be sitting up all night listening to their moans and groans, and their cries for more whisky.' ' Och, sure it was an unlucky day when they got the taste of it : for it's well known that childer, when once they get the taste of sperits, are for all the world like the foxes when once they get an egg, or a chicken, the power of man can't keep 'em out of the poultry yard ever after.' ' Sure, if they ever come back to life, after being so kilt as they are, how will we ever keep 'em from the whisky-shops ?' ' It's all up wid 'em ; ochone, ochone, won't they

come to the gallows as sure as my name is Molly Fogarty? For wasn't it the taste for the dhrink that drove Bill Hoolihaun out of his seven senses, and made him steal a horse and kill a man that tried to prevent him?"

Captain Sitwell, who recounted this scene in a very dramatic style, giving such very successful imitations of the various brogues of the speakers as "set the table in a roar," here paused for breath, and Hunter angrily left the mess-room, enraged at the laughter his adventures and their consequences had excited.

"And what was the result?" inquired Mordant.

"That the Colonel sent over the surgeon to see the sick boys, and that Hunter, who came up in the midst of the tragi-comic scene, bestowed a liberal donation on 'the distressed mothers,' and promised never more to expose the lives of their sons to the danger of sudden transitions from heat to cold, nor their morals to the contagion of whisky-shops; on which the Irish matrons retired to their homes, blessing the rich English gentleman, who, 'they were sure, meant no earthly harm to the poor childer,

but just wished to amuse himself by a little sport.'"

"Hunter is only thoughtless," observed one of the officers, "but is a good fellow in the main."

"I hope none of those poor boys will die," said the Colonel.

"By-the-bye, would not this be a good opportunity for us to make a subscription to establish a school?" suggested Major Elvaston. "It would keep the children out of mischief, and give them some instruction."

"Agreed, agreed," said many voices, and, before the party separated, a considerable sum was subscribed for the humble purpose proposed; and, when Hunter heard of it the following day, he largely contributed to the scheme, saying, "that he whose folly had led to the whole thing, ought to give the most to carry out so good a plan."

"O, Honor, have you heard how Mr. Hunter has killed half the poor children in the place?" said Mrs. O'Flaherty, entering her house in a state of great agitation.

"Now, what cock-and-a-bull-story have you got hold of, mother?" was the disrespectful reply.

"You never believe anything, Honor; but didn't I, with my own eyes, see Heaven knows how many poor wailing mothers, bemoaning and crying, go up to the barracks to demand vengeance on Mr. Hunter for having kilt their sons."

"And don't we all know that kilt in our country does not mean killed?"

"But wasn't it cruel, Honor, for him to hurt them? You must allow it was; and the poor mothers would not say their sons were even kilt, unless he had severely maltreated them."

"Mother, mother, you are just for all the world like a child—ready to believe anything, or everything that people tell you."

"Well, it isnt very mannerly of you to tell me so. You wouldn't hear Grace O'Neill speak in that manner to her grandmother."

"Perhaps not; but the Countess O'Neill and you are very different persons."

"Perhaps we may be; but there's as great a difference between Grace O'Neill, Honor, and you—and it may be more—than between her grandmother and me."

"Now you're on the high horse, mother, there will be no getting good of you for

some hours; so I'll go and take a walk." And Honor arose to prepare for going out.

"You wouldn't see Grace O'Neill strolling about the streets by herself, or marching with them wild young officers. Oh, Honor! how can you put yourself in the mouths of people in this manner? What will they *think*, what will they *say* of you?"

"Hush, mother, you shouldn't be using such strange phrases as 'putting myself in the mouths of people.' Such a manner of speaking makes the officers laugh at you."

"More shame for them, and for you to tell me of their impudence." And Mrs. O'Flaherty's face grew red with anger.

"There, again—off you go, mother. Once for all, don't be foolish—don't mind what people say, or think. Isn't it the first wish of your heart to see me married to a rich man? Is it, or is it not?"

"Yes, certainly: but, mind, Honor—*properly, respectably married*. Sure what else do I think of from morning till night?"

"Well, then, mother, let me play my own game. I know what I'm about; and you'll see that before long I'll be married to a rich man."

"God grant it, Honor, for that would be a joyful day to me. And, now you talk of marriage, it reminds me that I saw a wedding-ring in the candle last night as plain as ever I saw anything in my life; and that's a good sign, my dear."

"How can you be so superstitious, mother, as to pay any attention to dreams and signs? It was only yesterday you told me that you heard the *Banshee* wailing under your window the night before."

"Well, and so I did, Honor, as sure as I am now sitting here."

"Nonsense, mother, it was only the cat; for I saw it. But I must be off; for I have business upon my hands that must not be neglected."

"Honor, Honor, for the love of God take care what you are about! It would be the death of me—it would bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave—if you got yourself into any scrape; and you're so wild and giddy that I am always in a fever when you are out of my sight."

"How can I bring your grey hairs to the grave, when you have had them cut off, and wear a wig? Wild and giddy as you think

me, I know what I'm about; and, though I may make a fool of somebody, no one shall make a fool of me, I can tell you;" and off walked the reckless girl, leaving her weak and foolish mother to reflect on the hints thrown out by her in their recent conversation.

"She's such a wilful girl!" soliloquized Mrs. O'Flaherty, "that all I can say makes no impression on her; but yet, somehow or other, I can't help thinking she'll manage to get a husband for herself better than if I were to interfere with her plans, for she's very cunning, and afraid of nothing. It's plain to be seen that this rich young officer, Mr. Hunter, whom every one says has oceans of gold, has taken a great fancy to her, though I could see that at first he rather disliked her. She has talked him into it; and, if she can persuade him to marry her, sure her fortune, and mine, too, would be made. All this will be well and good; but I had much rather that she was courted as Grace O'Neill is, that is, that those who have any thought of her would come here respectful and distant, like as if they considered it a great favour and honour to be allowed to

come sometimes, and not too often neither, and behave to her as gentlemen do to Grace and her grandmother, treating them as if they were queens, instead of being as much at their ease here, laughing, joking, and quizzing every one, and me more than any one else, until I don't know what to think or say.

"But it's no use fretting. One can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, as the saying is, and I can no more make Honor like Grace O'Neill. How *she* keeps men at a distance! *Her* grandmother never has the least occasion to speak to her not to do this, or not to say t'other, while I'm always on thorns when Honor is playing off her tricks—quizzing one, flattering another, and trying to make fools of all, when she doesn't care a farthing for the whole set put together. I'm often quite ashamed, and don't know which way to turn. But it's no use fretting, as I said before. With such a daughter as Honor, it's like having a lottery ticket, that may turn up a prize and make a fortune, or a blank, and half kill one with disappointment. Judy! Judy!"

"Coming, ma'am."

"Judy, just give me a cup of tea, with a spoonful of whisky in it. Mind, ONLY a teaspoonful, for I have a stitch in my stomach."

Exit Judy, muttering to herself as she descended to the kitchen to prepare the beverage, "Surely the ould missis has so many stitches, and takes so many teaspoonfuls of whisky in the tea to cure 'em, she'll be sure to be sewn up;" and the old woman, with the humour peculiar to her country folk, indulged in a hearty laugh at her own pleasantry. "I suppose," added Judy, "that a tea-spoon means a table-spoonful; but, as I'm in doubt, I'll just give her the benefit of my uncertainty, and make it a gravy-spoonful. Poor ould lady, 'twill do her no harm, as I know by experience, for 'twill only loosen the strings of her tongue, and then she'll be for telling me what a miserable woman she is to have lost a husband that bothered the life of her; or else she'll fall asleep, and then she won't know how long Miss Honor has been out, and won't begin quarrelling when she comes in."

"Are you sure, Judy, that there's *only* a teaspoonful of whisky in this tea, for it smells mighty strong?"

"I'll take my oath, ma'am, there's not a dhrop more than a spoonful."

"I'm very poorly, Judy."

"I dare say you are, ma'am, and no wonder, you have so much fretting."

"True for you, Judy. No one knows what I go through. To have lost such a husband! Sure, when he was alive, I had nothing in the whole world to think of but to keep him quiet. He'd never let me meddle nor make in anything, for he'd have everything his own way."

"That must have been a great comfort to you, ma'am."

"Only, sometimes, he'd fly into such passions, and then, Judy, he'd push me and beat me. Oh, oh! when I think of how many times I have been obliged to keep my room, Judy, from the black eyes he has given me —oh, oh!"

"Don't cry so, ma'am, you'll make yourself quite ill, indeed you will. Compose yourself a bit."

"But, when his passion was over, Judy, then he would be so good-humoured, and he'd say he was sorry for having hurt my feelings. Oh! oh! oh!"

"What a polite gentleman he must have been, ma'am, to call blacking your eyes hurting your feelings."

"Yes, Judy, he was very polite when he wanted to make friends. Oh! oh! what a miserable woman I am to have lost him!"

CHAPTER II.

"WHAT can have become of Sir Henry Travers' letter?" said the Countess O'Neill, turning over the leaves of her blotting-book. "I left it on my table, I am perfectly sure, yet I can find it nowhere." And she examined among her books, thinking the letter might have got under one of them.

"I did not see it," replied her granddaughter, "and, as it cannot be found, I fear it may have been blown into the street through the window."

"That would be very disagreeable; for, if taken up and read, a publicity would be given to Sir Henry's proposal that I much wish to avoid, and which could not be agreeable to him."

"How strange his proposing for me, who have never given him the slightest encouragement!"

"Very true, my dearest child; but rich men in general (and Sir Henry Travers in particular) are prone to think that their fortunes, if not themselves, are too tempting to be resisted, and more especially by girls who are not largely dowered."

"Which poor opinion of my sex renders me less compassionate for any pain which my rejection may inflict on him."

"We must, however, treat him with politeness and respect, Grace; for a man can pay a woman no higher compliment than to solicit her hand."

"I wish he would transfer his attentions to Florence, or Kate Fitzgerald—they would not, perhaps, refuse him."

"I wish so, too, Grace; for poor Lady Fitzgerald was telling me, the last day she was here, how desirous she is to have her daughters married."

"They also desire it, and have told me as much. How odd that, with a kind father and mother, and with every indulgence be-

neath the paternal roof, daughters should wish to leave their parents !"

" I have a presentiment, darling, that ere long another opportunity will be afforded you of leaving your fond old grandmother, and a much more tempting one than that which we have just declined."

" However tempting the offer may be, nothing shall ever induce me to leave you, dearest grandmother ;" and, as Grace spoke, a bright blush overspread her cheeks.

" But how few men, my child, would like to have their gay establishment hampered with the perpetual presence of their wife's mother, much less of her grandmother, whose age and infirmities would render her residence even less desirable ? My greatest wish on earth, darling, is to see you happily settled in life before ' I go hence, and am no more seen ;' and, well aware of the obstacle which your persistance in not separating from me would oppose to your marrying, I must, once for all, tell you, darling that, when you marry, my determination is taken not to reside beneath the same roof with you. But don't weep," (the tears had started

in Grace's eyes,) "don't be alarmed, although I will not reside beneath the same roof, I have no objection, provided your future husband does not oppose it, to procure an abode as close to yours as can be found, so that no day may pass without my seeing my own Grace."

"I could not love a husband who was not as anxious for your society as I am, my dear grandmother;" and Grace arose and fondly embraced the Countess.

"Bless, bless you, my own child!"

"A letter from the Honourable Lieutenant Vernon, madam," said Patrick O'Donohough, entering the room and presenting the epistle on a silver waiter. "His servant attends for an answer."

Patrick glanced at his young mistress, as he invariably styled Grace, and failed not to notice an expression of strong dissatisfaction on her countenance. "It is as I suspected," thought he, as he left the apartment. "She doesn't like this same Mr. Vernon, although, I must own, he is a fine young man. I'd lay a wager of a bottle of wine that the letter contains a proposal of marriage, and, what's more, that it won't be accepted, although

Lieutenant the Honourable Mr. Vernon *is* a fine young man; ay, and a sensible and good one, too, and will be, as I hear, a very rich lord. The young lady's heart is, I strongly suspect, pre-engaged. What else could make her grow so thoughtful, so grave-like? —she that used to be as gay as a lark, her clear sweet voice ringing in my ears as she moved from room to room. She has left off singing now, or, when she does sit down to the piano, to please the Countess, I have remarked that she sings only melancholy songs. But I've heard tell that the nightingale never sings so sweetly until its breast is pierced by a thorn; and sure is not the dart of love in a maiden's breast the same as the thorn in the bird's? But there's the bell—I must answer it."

"Patrick, tell Mr. Vernon's servant he need not wait. I will send an answer."

Patrick stole a look at his young lady, whose countenance, to him who had so long studied it, revealed that the contents of the letter brought by Mr. Herbert Vernon's servant had afforded her no pleasure.

"Yes, it's just as I suspected, she won't be Mrs. Herbert Vernon I see plainly; but

I have a strong notion that, if the proposal came from a certain gentleman, the first letter of whose name is Captain Mordant, she would not look so discontented."

Having dismissed Mr. Vernon's servant, Patrick resumed his cogitations. "I can't make out why the said Captain Mordant has left off coming here," thought Patrick, "and I think my young lady is as much puzzled and more distressed by his absence than I am; and yet, on second thoughts, I believe she can hardly be more uneasy about it than I am, for sure whatever troubles her must trouble me, who have no interest or care for any one in life but for her grandmother and herself, the last ties on earth that remain to me of my dear lost masther. Oh! what a pity that he did not live to see his grandchild; how he would have doted down on her; but sure he never saw his own daughter till he saw her in Heaven. I often think what a blessed meeting it must have been. Thanks be to God, she could only give him pleasant tidings. She could tell him, and that must be a great comfort to his mind, that his widow never took another husband in his place, never took off her mourning for

him, and that his poor faithful servant, Patrick O'Donohough, devoted his life, as in duty bound, to the widow, her child, *his* child, and grandchild, and hopes, when he leaves this world, to be allowed to serve and wait on his adored master in a better one!" and Patrick applied a handkerchief to his tearful eyes.

"I don't know how it is," resumed he after a pause, "but there's something about Captain Mordant that always reminds me of my noble master. There's the same stately air, which seems natural to the Captain as it was to Count O'Neill. There is the proud glance of the eyes, and the sweet smile which never glows into a laugh, but returns to a thoughtful expression, that I so often remarked in my dear master. I made sure he was in love with my young lady, and I can't help feeling sure of it still, for all he so seldom comes here now; for how many times, when he little thought I observed him, have I not seen him, early in the morning and late at night, pass before this house and look up at the windows with his heart, and a sorrowful one it seemed to be, in his eyes? How well I remember reading in a book that

my dear master used to study for hours one particular passage that said,

> 'The course of true love never did run smooth;
> But either it was different in blood,
> Or else misgraffed in respect of years;
> Or else it stood upon the choice of friends;
> Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
> War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it.'

"How hard it is, then, for poor lovers to be happy with so many things to interfere between 'em! Sure I know by sad experience how many obstacles there are! And wouldn't I now be a solitary and miserable old man if I hadn't placed all my hopes and dependence for happiness on seeing my young mistress happy? When we get ould, we must find our happiness in helping to make that of others. I hear that Captain Mordant, though of a great and noble family, is poor, being only a second son, and all the fortune entailed on the elder. Sure what an unnatural law it is that makes such a difference between the children of the same father and mother! One rich and enjoying every luxury money can give, and the other wanting the common comforts of life, and only because the first came into this world a year or two before the se-

cond! Sure it's enough to make younger brothers hate their elder ones. I've a strong suspicion that it's being a younger brother and poor that makes Captain Mordant keep away from my young lady. He finds he couldn't often see her without wishing never to leave her, and, as he isn't rich enough to propose, he thinks it more honourable to avoid her. But what if he has found this out too late?

"If the poor gentleman already loves her more than himself, and, worse still, if *she* loves him, isn't it a pity, ay, and a sin, too, that they should be kept asunder? If he could just have a hint given him that Miss O'Neill, instead of having only a poor fortune, as people suppose, will have one quite sufficient for every comfort, though not for grandeur, perhaps he would take courage, come here as he used to do at first, and end by making his proposals. How can I manage this? Let me see; I might tell his servant, but then he is a poor, ignorant, vulgar fellow, not fit for a gentleman to talk to, so he dare not take the liberty to speak to his master, or repeat what I might say. Lieutenant Vernon's servant is a superior man; he has education,

and his master often talks to him when he is dressing. I'll tell it to *him* as a great secret, make him swear never to repeat it to mortal, and that will be sure to induce him to tell it to his master, who will probably repeat it to Captain Mordant. But what if Captain Mordant should be too proud and high-minded to propose to a lady richer than himself? and such things do happen sometimes. Ay, that would be a bad job! Well, well, I must only wait and watch as a sentinel does, and do my best to bring this young couple together, if, as I shrewdly suspect, they have set their hearts on each other."

While these reflections were passing in the mind of the faithful Patrick O'Donohough, the Countess O'Neill and her granddaughter were concocting a suitable answer to the letter received from Mr. Herbert Vernon.

"The offer is so good a one, so suitable in all points of view, my child, that it should not be lightly rejected," observed the Countess.

"Yes, dearest grandmother, I grant Mr. Vernon appears to be a very amiable young man, and that his position is unexceptionable;

but I do not, and I feel quite sure I never shall, entertain for him that preference a person ought to feel to a suitor she accepts. He has not created the slightest interest in my heart; I feel even more than indifference for him, owing to his persistance in seeking to win me when the marked coldness with which I have submitted to, rather than received, his attentions ought to have taught him that he had nothing to hope."

"I must admit, Grace, that you certainly gave him no encouragement. Nevertheless, may we not look on his persistance as a proof of the steadiness and depth of his attachment?"

"Or, the obstinacy of his character."

"I never saw you disposed to judge so harshly before."

Grace blushed, and her grandmother became more than ever convinced that a preference for another had a great influence in the prompt rejection her grand-daughter had decided on giving to Mr. Vernon's suit.

"Perhaps, on a longer acquaintance, you may appreciate Mr. Vernon's good qualities more highly, my dear," resumed the Countess O'Neill, wishing to probe Grace's heart more profoundly.

"Be assured, dearest grandmother, no length of acquaintance, no intimacy, could change my sentiments with regard to him. He may possess every virtue, every good quality; but, while admitting that he does, I should still remain as utterly indifferent towards him as now."

"Then I suppose nothing is left for us but to send a polite refusal."

"Nothing. And let me entreat you, dearest grandmother, not to ask me to answer the note he enclosed to you for me. Say all you think right, but let him decidedly understand that he must not hope for any change in my sentiments."

The letter was written, and confided for delivery to Patrick O'Donohough, who feeling the importance of his mission, arrayed himself with peculiar care to fulfil it. "Poor gentleman," thought he, "I bring him news that will make his heart ache, if I am not greatly mistaken."

"Here, Mr. Pigott, is a letter from the Countess O'Neill for Mr. Vernon," said Patrick, addressing himself to the *valet de chambre* of that gentleman.

"I hope its contents will afford Mr. Ver-

non satisfaction, for I have seldom seen him betray so much anxiety as about this expected letter. He has paced up and down his room, rang the bell repeatedly, and shown the utmost anxiety to receive it. Between you and I, Mr. O'Donohough, I suspect that the one I took to your house this morning contained a proposal of marriage. Indeed, nothing short of it could have occasioned so much anxiety to Mr. Vernon. I must say that, as far as my own feelings are concerned, I entertain much less repugnance to this affair than I anticipated; for, although I have never lived with a married gentleman, having resigned my situation no less than three times solely because the noblemen I served were about to marry. I should be tempted to remain with Mr. Vernon; I like him so much, and have heard your young lady so well spoken of."

"My young lady, Mr. Pigott, is nothing less than an angel."

"It is to be wished, however, that she was rich. Not because Mr. Vernon requires a fortune—for he will have a noble one, and has at present a most liberal allowance—but just because noble families, when their sons

marry untitled ladies, expect that there will be lots of money to make up for the want of rank."

"But sure, if my young lady has no title herself, her grandmother has."

"Why, to tell you the plain truth, Mr. O'Donohough, we in England attach very little importance to foreign titles."

"What! do you mean to say that the title of a Count of the Holy Roman Empire, bestowed on Count O'Neill by the Empress herself, for his noble deeds, isn't better than half the titles of your new-fangled nobility, whose grandfathers got rank on account of their money?"

The rising colour of Patrick, and a certain animation of manner peculiar to him when displeased, convinced Mr. Pigott he had touched on delicate ground when he spoke disparagingly of the title of the Countess O'Neill; and, unwilling to offend Patrick, he said, "that, for his part, he entertained the highest deference for Counts and Countesses of the Holy Roman Empire;" but added, "that Mr. O'Donohough must admit that other foreign titles could not be estimated so highly"—an admission that perfectly soothed the rising anger of Patrick.

"Perhaps, Mr. Pigott, you may not be aware that Miss O'Neill, although she may not be termed an heiress, has a very considerable fortune well secured to her, besides diamonds and other valuables, the gifts of the Emperor of Austria to her grandmother."

"Has she, indeed? I am very glad to hear it. It gives importance to the marriage—it equalizes it, as one may say—for in England noble families are not particularly desirous that their sons should marry Irish ladies."

"I suppose not, Mr. Pigott; for as real Irish ladies, descended, as Miss O'Neill is, from the Irish kings, are so much above the English nobility, they are afraid their daughters-in-law will look down on them."

Whether Mr. Pigott quite coincided with this explanation or not, we do not know, but he was too prudent to dissent from it; and Patrick, thinking that it was high time that the letter of which he had been the bearer should reach the hands of the gentleman to whom it was addressed, observed with an air of lofty dignity that he would no longer prevent Mr. Pigott from delivering the letter, which, he said, Mr. Vernon was so impatient to receive; and, with a bow that would not

have shamed a gentleman of the chamber at the court at Vienna, took his leave.

"There's no talking with these touchy Irish without offending their pride," observed Mr. Pigott, when Patrick had withdrawn out of hearing; while the latter muttered, "Nothing enrages me like these English, with their false notions of the Irish, and their nonsensical vanity about their own upstart nobility. What's an English Lord to an Irish King, I should like to know? Why, Miss O'Neill has better blood in her veins than all the nobility in England put together."

CHAPTER III.

The advice given by Lady Fitzgerald to her daughters had not been thrown away, and Sir Geoffrey, following her dictates, henceforth addressed his hospitality more exclusively to the unmarried gentlemen of his neighbourhood than he had hitherto done. These, flattered by the frequent invitations they received to Ballymacross Castle, where none of the *élite* of the officers of the —— Regiment were engaged to meet them, grew into habits of closer intimacy than formerly, and often declared to each other, "that the Fitzgeralds, after all, were very agreeable neighbours, and the girls pleasant and sociable, now that one had got to know them better."

The phrase "after all" invariably implies

that the speaker had not always considered the individuals spoken of in so favourable a light as at present, and such was precisely the case in this instance; for, so wholly had the attention of the ladies of Ballymacross Castle been directed to the few stray Englishmen of family who ventured to this remote part of Ireland, tempted by curiosity to view a country of which less is known to them than of any other portion of Europe, or to the few officers of noble or rich families in England quartered in the sister kingdom, that the neighbouring gentlemen had formerly felt themselves aggrieved by the preference shown to men whom they were by no means disposed to think their superiors. Now, the system hitherto adopted at Ballymacross Castle was changed: those who previously had seen little to admire in its young ladies, because viewed through the medium of prejudice, began to find out many good qualities in them. "The formality and reserve for which I disliked them wear off when one sees them oftener," observed Mr. Oliphant Henessy, a neighbouring squire, possessed of an estate of some three or four thousand a year, who kept a pack of hounds

and an open house for his brother sportsmen.

"They acquired that formality from their constant association with the English, who assume reserve for the purpose of concealing their natural dulness," said Mr. M'Vigors, a hearty hater of England and the English.

"For my part," remarked Sir Henry Travers, "I think the young ladies of Ballymacross Castle peculiarly well-bred and polite, and the antiquity of their descent is an additional title to my respect."

"Antiquity is the last recommendation I should desire in a wife," observed one of the speakers.

"I applied it to the descent of the ladies, and not to them personally," replied Sir Henry Travers, with an air of offended dignity.

"*You* ought to speak well of them, Travers, if only in gratitude for all the kind things they say of you," remarked Mr. M'Vigors.

"Of me, did you say?" inquired the Baronet, appearing much pleased.

"Come, come, Travers, don't look so innocent. You must have seen that Miss Fitzgerald has a more than common interest in you; and I can answer that your name is

never mentioned before her that she does not declare you to be a very superior man," said Mr. Oliphant Henessy.

"I admire Miss Kate so much," resumed he, "that, if I had not a strong suspicion that M'Vigors has made a hole in her heart, I'd lay my hand and fortune at her feet, as the novels say."

"Then you know more than I do," was the reply of Mr. M'Vigors, "and probably more than the young lady herself."

"I am so sure of what I say on this point, M'Vigors, that I am ready to lay a wager that if you pop the question to Miss Kate she will not say no."

The fact was, that so skilfully had the young ladies of Ballymacross applied their flatteries to each and all of the neighbouring bachelors, that they had conciliated enemies into friends; and, although some might not be disposed to marry them, all were inclined to help them to husbands. Sir Henry Travers and Mr. M'Vigors, being known to be the vainest and richest men, were selected by the others as suitable husbands for the Misses Fitzgerald, to whom they were desirous to give what they termed "a good turn,"

namely, to assist in getting them married. Nor had these gentlemen asserted any falsehood when they assured the Baronet and Mr. M'Vigors of the tender impression which they believed had been made by them on the hearts of the Misses Fitzgerald, for the latter having selected the two richest men in their neighbourhood for the subject of their peculiar commendations had led to the belief that Mr. Henessy expressed.

A vain and foolish man is never more vulnerable to the flattery of one woman than when he is smarting under the rejection of another. The unsought preference of the one is a balm to the wound inflicted on his *amour propre* by the slight of the other; hence, he turns with peculiar satisfaction to the person who administers it. Never previously had Sir Henry Travers bestowed a thought on Miss Fitzgerald; but, from the hour that Mr. Oliphant Henessy revealed the commendations bestowed on him by that lady he thought of nothing else, and now wondered he ever could have accorded a preference over her to Miss O'Neill. "I'll show that young lady that, though *she* may reject me, there are others who have seen the best

society in England, and, of course, the most distinguished men, yet who prefer me," thought the Baronet to himself, "and, when she sees Lady Travers in her bridal dress, and wearing my family diamonds, she may regret her folly in refusing my offer."

The combined wishes of exciting the regret of Miss O'Neill, and of proving his gratitude to Miss Fitzgerald for her admiration of him, led him the following day to pay a visit to Ballymacross Castle, and, as he gazed on the face of her on whom he intended to confer the favour of his hand, he discovered a charm in its expression which two days before he would have positively denied. His unusual attention pleased her, and she became more animated and agreeable. The morning sitting-room, in which he had been received, being a very spacious one, a conversation, *sotto voce*, might be carried on without being overheard by the persons at the other end of it, and Miss Fitzgerald, being opportunely placed at a bay-window at the opposite side from her mother and sister, seated at her drawing-table, the Baronet, under the pretence of examining her drawing, took a chair by her side. "A

room," observed he, "never looks furnished, nor habitable, unless a lady surrounded by the objects that denote her elegant occupations makes the principal point of attraction in it. Don't you agree with me, Miss Fitzgerald?"

"The presence of women certainly improves the appearance of a room," was the reply.

"I wish *I* could find a lady who would render my large rooms habitable;" and the speaker heaved a sigh.

"I should think, Sir Henry, *you* could have no difficulty in meeting one."

"Ah! Miss Fitzgerald, might I venture to hope that *you* would do me this honour, that *you* would accept my house for your home, and its master for your husband, how happy I should feel!"

The lady looked down, seemed embarrassed, and muttered something about "the proposal being so sudden, so unexpected."

"Only say that I may hope—that I am not disagreeable to you."

"Oh! what a word!"

"May I, then, flatter myself?"

"Yes, Sir Henry, I will not trifle with your feelings. I will be yours."

And Miss Fitzgerald placed her hand in his, and he raised it to his lips. Lady Fitzgerald and her second daughter, who had been watchful spectators of this scene, although both affected to be wholly unconscious of it, exchanged glances of satisfaction; that of Miss Kate, however, being much less sincere than her mother's, as she envied her sister this conquest, notwithstanding that she had often depreciated Sir Henry.

"May I speak to your father, my dear Florence?"

"If you wish it, Sir Henry. But don't you think it would be better to tell mamma, who will be surprised, and perhaps shocked, at this our almost *tête-à-tête*?"

"Yes, charming Florence." And the Baronet arose, and proceeded to the other end of the room with an air of great dignity. "Permit me, my lady," said he, "to hope that your ladyship will sanction the happiness your amiable daughter has conferred on me by accepting the offer of my hand?"

"I can have no objection, my dear Sir Henry, quite the contrary; for, although Florence might have been most advantageously

settled in England, and in families of the highest distinction, I always wished to see her established in our own immediate neighbourhood; and to whom could I feel more happiness in confiding her destiny than to Sir Henry Travers?"

"And you, Miss Kate, I trust will not object to me for a brother?"

"Certainly not, Sir Henry. I could not have one more to my satisfaction."

"I wish particularly to see Sir Geoffrey. Perhaps, my lady, you could direct me where to find him, or send a messenger to request his return?"

The bell was rung, and a servant was instructed to go in search of his master; and, luncheon being now announced, Sir Henry Travers, nothing loath, led his future mother-in-law into the dining-room, followed by the Misses Fitzgerald, who exchanged sundry glances as side by side they proceeded.

"I give you joy," whispered Miss Kate. "You have at last secured a husband, such as he is."

"Thank you, Kate, and I hope you may soon secure one, also."

"I hardly know whether it would not be

better to remain an old maid, and suffer the penalty of leading apes in a certain place not to be named to ears polite, than to lead a fool on earth, Florence."

"*Chacun à son gout, ma chère,*" was the answer: and the interlocutors took their places at the table, looking, if not feeling, all amiability.

Lady Fitzgerald was in high good humour, her eldest daughter perfectly well pleased with *herself* if not with her future *husband*, and Miss Kate, hoping that she, too, would soon have a suitor. "One marriage in a family often leads to another," thought she; "and, although our neighbourhood offers little choice, Heaven knows, I have made up my mind not to be fastidious."

Already had Lady Fitzgerald changed her manner to her eldest daughter. The future Lady Travers was a much more important person in her eyes than the mature Miss Fitzgerald, who had remained so long without ever receiving a single offer of marriage that the thoughtful and anxious mother had begun to entertain serious fears that she never would, and, consequently, was delighted at the prospect of a good settlement for her.

Sir Henry's appetite was by no means impaired by his position. He partook of everything on the table, pronounced all excellent, cast many tender looks at the *dame de ses pensées*, and assumed the air of a conqueror of hearts.

Miss Fitzgerald, according to the custom of ladies in her peculiar position from time immemorial, ate little, and looked interesting, her thoughts occupied by plans for passing future seasons in London, no longer as a neglected spinster, but as a fashionable wife, and wishing that so much good was not coupled with a very tiresome and empty-headed husband. Sir Geoffrey now arrived, and, having declared himself hungry as a hunter, he commenced doing ample justice to the substantial viands placed before him. The more than ordinary cordiality of his wife and daughters to their guest might have enlightened any other man as to the fact that a new relationship must have taken place between the parties, but he was too intent on satisfying his hunger to notice anything but the excellence of the food he was devouring, until, having washed it down with some old claret, he laid aside his knife and fork.

"You sent for me, my dear Travers," said he, looking round to ascertain that the servants had left the room. "Anything new? Any parish business?"

"Something infinitely more interesting to me, Sir Geoffrey, and which, I hope, will be agreeable to you. I have obtained the permission of Miss Fitzgerald, and the sanction of her excellent mother, to solicit the honour of her hand in marriage."

"The devil you have! And a very good job, too. I give my hearty consent, for there is no man whom I should prefer as a son-in-law, only remember, my dear Travers, Florence's sole fortune consists in her personal merits and good qualities, in which I really consider her rich. I like to be open and frank, so I tell you the truth at once."

"And I assure you, Sir Geoffrey, I seek no fortune but the young lady herself."

"Then it's a settled thing, and I heartily wish you joy. Come here, Florence, my dear, and you, too, Travers. Here is her hand, and right glad am I to bestow it on a neighbour I so heartily esteem, instead of her being transplanted to England."

Sir Geoffrey placed his daughter's hand in

that of her future husband, and, with moistened eyes pronounced a blessing on the pair, while Lady Fitzgerald applied her laced pocket handkerchief to her eyes, and echoed the paternal blessing.

"You'll stay and dine with us, my dear Travers, won't you?"

"Very sorry, but unfortunately I have two or three friends to dine with me."

"Well, come to morrow, and every day you can spare, I hope; for now we may consider you as one of the family."

Sir Henry Travers took a tender leave of his future bride, and rode home in a state of great elation of spirits. "Florence," thought he, "if not a beauty, is a very elegant girl, it must be allowed; possesses the air *distingué* and ease of manner which only high society can bestow, and is well calculated to perform the honours of my house and table. She will look very dignified in my family diamonds and dressed in velvet. I like to see ladies wear velvet, especially if they happen to be tall and stately, which fortunately she is. I hope she will never hear of my having been refused by Miss O'Neill. It would vex and mortify her, for

women don't like such things. Florence, as her mother more than hinted, has refused several good offers in England, which is certainly very flattering to me, who am the preferred. I don't think, however, that I have anything to dread from the Countess O'Neill, or her grand-daughter, on the subject of the latter having refused me. They are not at all addicted to gossipping, so that my secret is safe. I cannot account for my not having at once solicited Miss Fitzgerald, instead of Miss O'Neill, who is too young and inexperienced to do the honours of my house with dignity. If she knew more of the world, and had mixed in the higher circles, she would have been wiser than to have rejected me. Miss Fitzgerald, whose taste has been cultivated, and who has seen the most distinguished men in England, has preferred me to all others; and this may well console me for the slight put on me by Miss O'Neill."

Such were the reflections in which Sir Henry Travers indulged as he rode home, where he found Mr. Oliphant Henessy and Mr. M'Vigors already arrived to dinner.

"You have paid a long visit, Travers,"

said the first: "and if I may judge by your countenance, a very agreeable one. How are the Misses Fitzgerald? We learned here that you had rode over to Ballymacross Castle, and we began to think we should have to dine without you, you stayed so late."

"Yes," observed Mr. M'Vigors, "Henessy and I have been saying that you could not do a wiser thing than to marry Miss Fitzgerald."

"A more agreeable thing I am sure I could not do," replied the Baronet; "and, not to keep friends like you longer in ignorance of my good fortune, I am happy to tell you I have proposed, and am accepted."

The gentlemen wished Sir Henry joy, shook him cordially by the hand, and predicted him much happiness in his marriage with a lady so every way amiable.

"Yet I don't know whether, if I had been in your place, I should not have preferred Miss Kate," observed Mr. M'Vigors, "for she is a very fine girl, and some years younger than her sister."

"I admire Miss Fitzgerald more," replied Sir Henry Travers; "but, even if I did not,

the circumstance of her being the eldest daughter of Sir Geoffrey and Lady Fitzgerald would be a recommendation in my eyes; and, as regards them, such I am sure is their respect for me, that had they an older daughter they would, I doubt not, have given her to me."

This speech was uttered so gravely, and with an air of such dignity, that Messrs. Henessy and M'Vigors, who found it difficult to refrain from laughing, exchanged glances. The Baronet retired to change his morning habiliments for evening ones, leaving his friends at liberty to indulge their suppressed laughter.

"Capital! capital!" exclaimed M'Vigors; "was there ever a better notion than that of Travers's thinking the parents show their respect by giving their eldest daughter to him?"

"Travers is a strange fellow," observed Mr. Henessy, "and parents in general would feel glad if all bachelors with good fortunes were of the same opinion as he! It would be a great help to elder daughters."

CHAPTER IV.

The frequent meetings and solitary walks of Honor O'Flaherty with Mr. Hunter, much as thay wished them to be concealed, after some time excited remark, and became the topic of conversation among a certain class of persons, the station in life of whom was not the most elevated nor the most prone to put a favourable construction on her inconsiderate conduct. Miss White, the milliner, a very censorious old maid, and whose shop was a favourite lounge of the officers, wondered whether Miss O'Flaherty would have the cleverness to secure a husband by all her rovings about with a certain young officer, and declared that if she did not it wouldn't be for the want of trying, though it was very doubtful whether she had chosen the right way.

The grocer shook his head and whispered to his wife, "that he was afraid Miss Honor was making herself too cheap in walking about so much with that foolish young officer who had behaved so cruelly to the poor boys; and his wife, a great prude, "thanked goodness that when *she* was single no one could say that *she* was ever seen rambling about with any man." Even Mrs. Casey, the laundress, commented on Miss O'Flaherty's open flirtation, and wished, for the honour of Ireland, that she wouldn't go gallivanting about with officers;" and, when she one day met Judy, the servant of Mrs. O'Flaherty, could not resist informing her of the reports in circulation about Miss Honor.

"Then botheration to ye for a pack of backbiters," said Judy, highly indignant at the liberty taken with the name of her young lady. "Mayn't a lady take a walk with a young gentleman without ye'r making evil out of it? There's no more harm in Miss Honor than in a young kid that frisks about from side to side butting at one after another, and having her merry laugh *with* all, ay, be my soul, and *at* all. I'd like to see the man that would dare attempt the least

freedom with her; she'd soon teach him manners, that's what she'd do; so, Misthis Casey, if you wish to keep friends with me, let me hear no more of your nonsense about Miss Honor, for as well might you expect to have no froth on your soapsuds as to expect that Miss Honor O'Flaherty will conform herself to the opinions of you and the likes of you."

"Sure, Judy, you needn't take it up so hot; I meant no harm, quite the contrary; I only wished you might know what people said, and just give a hint to the young lady, to be more on her guard."

"Arrah, Misthis Casey, don't be putting your mouth on half-plates, to try to persuade me that you had a good motive in repeating the scandal of a pack of gossips. No, no, I know the nature of 'em better: the low would like to pull down the high, and are never so pleased as when they can pick a hole in the coat of a neighbour; so let me advise you to put your tongue in your pocket, and mind your soap, starch, and blue, instead of mentioning the names of your betters."

And off marched Judy, highly irate that Miss Honor's name should be used so freely.

"I've often tould her how it would be," said Judy to herself. "She'll get herself into the mouths of all the tag, rag, and bob-tail in the place. Oh! sure and wouldn't it be the death of her mother if it came to her ears! But be my troth I'll up and tell Miss Honor how her krackter is tore to pieces, and that may open her eyes to the folly of gallivanting with Mr. Hunter. Sure, if he has any thought of popping the question, she has given him plinty of opportunities, and ought now to bring him to the point at once."

"You look as cross as a cat, Judy," observed Honor O'Flaherty, the night of the day that the evil comments had reached the ear of Judy.

"And no wonder, Miss Honor. Sure ain't the heart of me beating against my ribs, and fluttering and fluttering for all the world like a poor bird shut up in a cage, ever since I heard what is said of you in regard to your gallivanting about with that young officer. Ochone! Miss Honor, did I ever think that you'd demean yourself so, and bring down the ould and grand family you have sprung from, so low." And tears rolled down the coarse red face of the speaker.

A deep blush of mingled anger and shame dyed the cheeks of Honor, for she had enough Irish pride to resent the insult offered by the censure of Judy's gossipping acquaintances, though not sufficient sense to prevent her giving cause for these remarks.

"What an old fool you must be, Judy, to mind such nonsense, and to repeat it!" observed Honor, endeavouring to assume an air of indifference.

"Don't say that, don't say that, Miss Honor. Wouldn't you feel shocked and angry, ay, be my soul, and sorrowful, too, if you heard any one you loved and respected spoken ill of? Sure evil tongues leave sore blisters on whatever they touch—blisters that no healing plaster can take away the mark of."

"Nonsense, Judy; do you think I mind what a set of low-born, ignorant brutes say of me?"

"Arragh, *cuishla ma chree*, if you received a kick from a horse, would it make any difference whether the beast was a thoroughbred one, or a cart-horse? Or, if you got a bad cut, would it matter whether it was done by a horn-handled knife, or a gold-handled one? No, be my troth, it wouldnt'; the

hurt would be all the same. Scandal, Miss Honor, *mavourneen*, is for all the world like gould leaf, a small bit may be drawn out to cover a great surface."

"But I know right well what I am about, Judy. I'll soon be married to a rich gentleman, and, when the knot is tied, what can these backbiters who have been talking to you say, then?"

"Faith, they'll say you talked and walked the gentleman into the marriage, and wouldn't that be very vexing? If this gentleman wants to marry you, Miss Honor, why can't he come and propose for you genteelly to the ould missis? She'd make no objections, I know, and you seem well disposed for it: and, then, sure you might have an elegant wedding, plinty of white ribbons and gloves, and all the grandees in the neighbourhood to be present; and that's what would stop all tongues, and make me hold up my head to the longest day I have to live."

"But, if there be reasons, Judy, why the business can't be settled publicly in this way, reasons that can't be got over?"

"Faith, miss, if the *raisins* were as big as figs, I wouldn't, if I were in your shoes, be

stealing into a marriage as if I was a thief. Would a lady of such good ould blood as is flowing in your blue veins, at father and mother's side, ever consent to steal into a church by the window to be married, instead of walking dacently in through the door?"

"Listen to me, Judy: Mr. Hunter's father is a very rich man, and would never consent to his son's marrying a girl who has no fortune; but once we are married he can't help himself, and will forgive the stolen marriage."

"And, if I were you, Miss Honor, I'd scorn to steal into a family, if they were as rich as Brian Baru, or ould Cray-shoes * himself, by the back door, when the hall door ought to be thrown open to receive me. If they have gould, haven't you blood to refine it? Don't you spring from the Irish kings, and what could they want more?"

"They wouldn't give a pin for that," replied Miss Honor, looking embarrassed.

"Not give a pin to get a daughter-in-law who would bring a fine old pedigree into their mean family? Why, they must be downright Hottentots, Miss Honor; and, if I were you, I'd scorn 'em if they had all the

* Crœsus.

gould that ever came from the Wicklow mines—that's what I would."

In proportion as the reasoning of poor Judy became unanswerable, awakening, as it did, the slumbering pride of Honor's ill-regulated mind, she grew angry. "It's no use talking, Judy," said she; "beggars can't be choosers. I've seen too much of the misery of poverty and dependence not to wish to secure riches by a good marriage."

"And small blame to you, if you do it dacently, Miss Honor. But isn't it sinful—ay, be my soul, and ungrateful, too—to say you have seen the misery of poverty and dependence, when I can take my oath you never have known either? Haven't you seen as much plinty in your mother's house as heart could wish? and, as for dependence, when did those who supplied the plinty ever make her or you feel it? Oh! Miss Honor, the givers of plinty have a blessing in giving; and, if the receivers have right hearts, they have a blessing in receiving. To be the objects of such continual care, attention, and friendship, must sure be a cause for happiness, and gratitude to God and man."

"But, if I'd rather give than take, Judy,

and if I long to be rich and able to pay back with interest all that our friends ever did for my mother and me, am I to be blamed?"

"Ah! Miss Honor, how can your spirit be so proud in some things, and so little so in others?"

"Have done, Judy, and don't bother me any more now. You'll be glad enough when you see me a fine lady, with carriages and horses, and servants and diamonds."

"Yes, Miss, that I will, provided you don't demean yourself to get them, and that you have a clean conscience and a firm mind to behave well to the gentleman who gives 'em, even though he is a *Sassenach* and an upstart."

The following day, Honor O'Flaherty went to Miss White's, the milliner's, to make some trifling purchase. "Of course," said that gossipping person, "you have heard the news, Miss O'Flaherty?"

"What news?" inquired the latter.

"That Miss Fitzgerald is to be married to Sir Henry Travers."

"But are you quite sure?"

"Certain. I have received an order to send my best silks and various other things to Ballymacross Castle, and I've got a pri-

vate note from Miss Fitzgerald's own maid to give me the news. This is no false intelligence, like what I heard yesterday, when —would you believe it, Miss O'Flaherty?— Captain Sitwell would insist that Sir Henry Travers had proposed for you, and said that Mr. Hunter, to whom you showed the letter, had told him so."

How did Honor's face flush when she heard this statement, and how did she mentally execrate Mr. Hunter for having betrayed that which she meant solely for his *own* ear! While Miss White, no less remarkable for her gossipping propensities than for her malevolence, told Honor of Captain Sitwell's story, she narrowly watched the countenance of Miss O'Flaherty, and, as she observed it turn crimson with anger and shame, she thought to herself, "I am now satisfied that the story was got up by Miss Honor herself for some purpose or other, and had not the slightest foundation. She refuse to be Lady Travers, indeed! Why, she'd jump for joy to have such a chance!"

"I understand," resumed Mrs. White, "that the Baronet is making a splendid settlement on his future bride, and is going

to add many fine jewels to the family ones, which I've heard my mother say were splendid. Travers Hall is to be newly-furnished, and an elegant carriage is ordered, with new liveries."

All these particulars were the fruit of the fertile brain of Miss White, who, having no partiality to Miss O'Flaherty, took a pleasure in exciting her envy.

"Every one must admit," resumed she, "that the young ladies of Ballymacross Castle never make themselves cheap—never compromise their own respectability, nor that of their family, by husband-hunting."

How Honor would have liked to box her ears, feeling, as it was meant she should, the reproof to herself, conveyed in the praise bestowed on the Misses Fitzgerald!

"The ladies at Ballymacross Castle will be very much displeased by this foolish report of Sir Henry Travers having proposed to you, Miss O'Flaherty," observed the spiteful old spinster, Miss White, "so I advise you to contradict it, for there are plenty of persons evil-disposed enough to say that it was you or some of your friends who circu-

lated the falsehood; and, as the Fitzgerald family have ever been the kindest and most generous friends to your mother, it would be a pity that they should be turned against her."

Honor felt the sting intended for her, and writhed under it; but, mastering her anger, she assumed a careless air and said, "Well, Miss White, I authorize you to give the most positive contradiction to this stupid and absurd tale; for, as your shop is the news-office of the place, this will be as public a mode of doing so as if I employed the town-crier to announce it, and will save me the shilling to which he would be entitled for the performance of his office;" and, nodding superciliously to the shopkeeper, Miss Honor left her.

"Oh the cockatrice, the serpent!" muttered Miss White. "Won't I pay her for this impudence? What a cut she gave me at last! I feel the wound festering at this moment, and won't have a happy minute till I have had my revenge. She's as bold as brass, that's what she is! Coming here, day after day, to fill up my shop to buy a yard of

penny ribbon, a mere excuse to meet the officers; and there she'll stand for half an hour shaking her dark ringlets, flashing her eyes around, and showing those white teeth of hers, (I hate such very white teeth,) and taking up the whole attention of the officers, and preventing their looking at my goods and buying them. I can see as plainly as possible that she has designs on that rich booby, Hunter; but won't I spoil her plans the very first time he comes here alone? I'll let him into her real character, so I will; for, it would be a sin to allow the poor young man to be made a fool of, and his poor parents to have the grief of seeing such a daughter-in-law in their elegant house, which I have heard is grander than a palace. I don't think that girl ever spent the value of two pounds in my shop since she has left off pinafores up to this hour. To be sure she has no money; but why should poor people, who can't buy, come and take up the place of the rich who can? And why should persons who haven't as many farthings as I have guineas pretend to be above me in the world? It's my opinion that those who are

poor should not presume to give cuts except to those who are still poorer than themselves, and should treat those who have a nice little fortune with proper respect, though they *may be* shopkeepers."

CHAPTER V.

Honor O'Flaherty had only advanced a few steps from Miss White's shop, when she encountered Mr. Hunter. "Well, my fair Honor," said he, "I was going in search of you, and having some loose coin to throw away at that old cat, Miss White's shop, I want you to select something for me. I have observed the old girl always looks cross, unless one lays out money with her. Come back, and choose some trumpery for me!"

"Not I," replied Honor, *brusquely;* "I am in no humour for such nonsense. But let us walk to the waterside, for I want to speak to you without interruption."

The pair walked on rapidly, and almost in silence, until they left the streets behind them, and, when free from the fear of inter-

ruption, Honor stopped and, laying her hand on Hunter's arm, thus addressed him:

"I'll tell you what, James, the time is come when we must positively elope, and get married. People are talking at every side of our meetings, our walks, and our attachment. I would not for the whole world have my character made the sport of idle tongues; and such will inevitably be the case if we do not at once put our intentions into execution."

"The Colonel has applied for leave of absence for me, and I expect it from the Horse Guards by this night's post. I have got my next quarter's allowance, and, if the leave comes, I'll be ready to start to-morrow night."

"What am I to do for a maid, James?"

"Try to do without one, until we are married."

"What, and travel with you alone? Not for all the world."

"Why, we shall be man and wife in two days, Honor, and then what need we care for what people may say? I had no notion you were so prudish, Honor."

"Prudish or not, I'll *not* go alone with you."

"Can it be possible that you are afraid to trust yourself alone with *me*?"

"Not a bit; for, if I thought you'd so much as kiss the tips of my fingers without my consent, I'd never marry you."

"Then, why want a maid?"

"Because I fear the comments of evil tongues; and I must insist, James, on having a woman to sit in the same carriage with us until we are wedded."

"What a pleasant journey we are likely to have!" observed Hunter sulkily, "with a stupid brute of a lady's maid stuck between us, before whom one can't say a word."

"Why not? We can have nothing to say that need be kept a secret. The woman who is to accompany us will know, of course, that we are eloping to be married, therefore we may talk about that without reserve, and a pleasant subject, too, at least according to my notion."

Hunter, nevertheless, did not appear convinced that a trio could be as pleasant as a *tête-à-tête*, and his clouded brow denoted his opinion.

"What a pity you don't speak French?" observed Honor.

"How should I have dreamed that I should ever require it?" was the reply.

"But where are we to find a maid? Let me reflect. I know a young mantuamaker, a decent woman, who, I dare say, would be glad to go with me."

"It has just occurred to me that my valet's wife would do better. She is a respectable woman, always accompanies her husband wherever I go, keeps my linen in order, and may prove a good servant to you."

"Yes, that will do famously. I'll have my clothes ready in a parcel to throw out of the window to your servant, so that when I leave the house I'll have nothing to encumber me. I do so hope that your leave of absence will come by this evening's post, and then we can start to-morrow night."

"I dare say it will."

"It's lucky you have a carriage of your own, and, if you take your own horses to the first post, there will be no one to tell who accompanied you, for you can tell your coachman when you get there that if he says anything you will discharge him. And now, one word more. Don't go to Miss White's shop. I've a particular reason for this, which

I'll tell you when we are on the road; and now good bye, my dear James."

"Can't you stay a little longer, Honor, I'm always so bored when I have no one to amuse me? I can no longer make the idle boys about the streets run races, swim, or box, as I used to do, the Colonel having forbidden it, because their plaguy mothers make a fuss about their being made ill by it; and, as you say I must not go to Miss White's shop to hear all the gossip, and our fellows in the regiment are always reading, drawing, or writing, and don't like being interrupted, I never know what to do with myself except to smoke, and too many cigars make me ill. I wish you'd walk about with me as long as you can stay out, or let me go home with you for a couple of hours."

"It's out of the question; my mother is as cross as possible at your coming so often, and would make a piece of work if you came. Go home and see your things packed up, that will kill time; and remember you have only one day more to pass without having me always by your side to amuse you. We'll have rare fun, you may be sure, for you know how I can make you laugh!"

"Yes, by Jove, no one ever made me laugh so much as you, my dear Honor; and I hope and trust, once we are married, I sha'n't be so dull and mopish as I am now. Whenever I see a wet day, I fall into the blue devils, and I don't know what to do with myself. I look out of the window, see the drops of rain running down the panes of glass, the waterspouts sending down showers on the dirty pavement, and the gutters stirred up by the heavy rain, presenting such a picture of filth and wretchedness that I turn from it with disgust, and feel fit to hang myself. Then I count the patterns on the paper on my room and on the carpet till my head feels giddy. I can find no one to play at cards, or backgammon, with me; I hate to smoke alone, and the day seems as if it would never pass away."

"Why don't you try to read? There are many books that might amuse you?"

"I have often taken up a book, but before I had read three pages it bored me so much that I have thrown it down. I have frequently wished to have a servant who could amuse me when I had no one else to do so; but, it would be considered ungentlemanly in

the regiment to associate with one's servant. I have also thought of learning to play the fiddle, but it would give me trouble, so I abandoned the project. Nothing is so tiresome as not knowing what to do with oneself, and having to look at one's watch every twenty minutes in the hope that at least double that time has passed. I dare say this never happened to you, Honor?"

"Never. I can hardly find time for half what I want to do."

"I have tried breakfasting *twice*, instead of once, to fill up the long day, and have had two luncheons, but they only made me ill, and spoiled my appetite for dinner; so at last I said to myself there is nothing left for me but to marry some lively girl that will amuse me and keep the blue devils away, and you came in my way, Honor, just in the nick of time. In England, I could have gone a long time without thinking of marrying: for there's no quarters to which a regiment can be sent where one can't find two or three public billiard-rooms; and, if there is no one to play with, one can play with the marker. Then there are boxing-matches, cock-fighting, dog-fighting, rat-hunting, and

various other amusements to kill time; but here there's nothing going on, and, as I find all my brother officers have taken to reading much more than when we were in England, there's no getting them to amuse me."

"Well, you'll soon be independent of them, that's one comfort," said Honor O'Flaherty.

Mr. Hunter drew out his watch, expressed his delight at finding it was an hour later than he had imagined, complimented his future bride on her power of making the time pass so much more rapidly than when he was alone; and she exhorting him again not to go to Miss White's shop, and to take a circuitous route back to the town, while she pursued the shortest one, they parted with expressions of impatience uttered by both for the arrival of the hour for their elopement.

"He is the greatest booby I ever met!" thought Honor to herself, as she retraced her steps towards home; "he doesn't care a straw for me, and, what is more, is such a goose as to let me see he only marries me to be amused. A nice compliment for a pretty girl," thought Honor, with bitterness of heart, "and one which I sha'n't forget

when I am Mrs. James Hunter. He'll be a terrible bore for a companion, but that I must remedy as well as I can by always having plenty of young and pleasant officers to lunch with us every day, and to spend the evenings. I'll make his money fly, I can tell him. I'll be the best-dressed woman wherever I go. I'll have the nicest carriages, and deny myself nothing that strikes my fancy; so that I'll make up to myself for having a stupid booby of a husband, who only marries me that I may amuse him. Oh! the fool—the fool!"

Mr. Hunter's leave of absence arrived as he expected, and he took means to apprize Honor O'Flaherty of the fact. She passed a considerable portion of the night in making her preparations for her intended flight; and, having concealed her packages in a small closet within her room, sat down to reflect on her projects. For the first time t,he thought of her mother's anger, grief, and shame when her elopement should be discovered, occurred to her: and some natural tears filled her eyes as she presented to herself her poor, weak-minded, and helpless parent left alone. But she wiped them

soon, at the recollection that hereafter she would secure independence and comfort to the old lady; and that her neighbours and friends, she felt certain, would not forsake her in her affliction. "I am determined to save her from all blame in this affair," thought Honor, with more kindness of intention and forethought than often instigated her actions; and, drawing forth her writing implements, she wrote as follows:—

"My dearest Mother,

"When you receive this letter, I shall be far away, on my road to be married to Mr. Hunter. Don't be angry or sorry, for it's no manner of use, and be assured the step I am taking will be for your advantage as well as for mine. I dared not tell you what I was going to do, for I knew you would be angry, and try to prevent me. Mr. Hunter felt sure his parents would not consent to his marrying a girl without a fortune, and, if they suspected his attachment to one so situated, would immediately take him away from this, so we determined to elope, get married in Scotland, then in England after, and, as he is an only child, his parents will

soon forgive our runaway match and receive us kindly. Don't blame me too much; for, if it had not been for the reasons I have just given you, I would never have consented to elope, as I would have much preferred having a public and elegant wedding at home. But rich husbands are not to be easily had, and to secure one I have consented to this step. Don't think I go alone with Mr. Hunter. His servant's wife, a decent woman, will accompany us, and I have insisted that she is to sit between him and me in the carriage during the whole journey, and sleep in my room. The first thing I will do when I am married will be to send you a certificate and some money, and I will take care you shall have a liberal allowance regularly paid as long as you live, that will enable you to have every comfort. Judy knows nothing whatever of my elopement, and never was in my confidence, so don't blame her. God bless you, my dearest mother! Forgive me for the pain I am inflicting on you at present, and believe me your affectionate daughter,

"Honor O'Flaherty."

A tear fell on the paper as it occurred to the writer how many would dim the eyes of her poor mother when she perused it, and a relenting of the heart made her hand unsteady as she folded and sealed the epistle. But Honor's was not a mind to dwell long on painful reflections, and she summoned to her aid to banish them, visions of future fortune and all the good that wealth can secure; and, to do her justice, the independence she should bestow on her mother, and the liberal gifts she would often send her, afforded the best consolation at this moment for the pangs of regret she for the first time experienced.

"I never before thought I liked my poor mother so well," murmured she; "but I can't bear to think how many sad hours she will spend, how many bitter tears she will shed. I wish Judy could read, for I'd write her a letter to tell her that she must not neglect anything that can afford comfort or consolation to her mistress, and that I will reward her well for her care. Poor Judy, too! perhaps I may never see her again. How hurt she will be that her young mistress, of whom she was so proud, should take a step that will set all

the neighbours talking! My native mountains, my bright river, that I've so often delighted to look upon as it ran sparkling and bounding on in its course, I feel a pang at leaving you, too. But, I must not think of all this, but turn my thoughts to when I can come back a rich lady, wearing the finest clothes, beautiful jewels, elegant laces, and with fine carriages, horses, and servants, and when the neighbours will say, 'Well, after all, Honor, though a wild girl, makes an excellent daughter.'"

"You're not well, darling," observed Mrs O'Flaherty the next morning, as she and her daughter sate at breakfast, of which meal Honor scarcely tasted. "Judy, Judy, come here!"

"Coming, ma'am, coming, ma'am," replied Judy, rushing in while tying on a white apron.

"I am sure, Judy, Miss Honor's not well. She can't eat a morsel of breakfast, and she looks as pale as if she hadn't had a wink of sleep the whole night. I have cut this nice thin slice of bread which you must toast for her, Judy, and——"

"Indeed, dear mother, I could not touch it."

"Then tell me, darling, what's the matter with you? Have you a headache, a pain in your side, or in your chest?"

"No, indeed, mother. There is nothing at all the matter with me, but I feel I can't eat."

"Look at your young mistress, Judy, see how pale she is, how heavy her eyes look! Only I know that my dear Honor never cries, I'd think she has been shedding tears."

Judy glanced at her youthful mistress, and, like Mrs. O'Flaherty, was struck with her unusual paleness and languid eyes; but, unwilling to increase the anxiety of her doting mother, she said, "Is it Miss Honor shedding tears? faith she's not given to do that same any way, for she thinks it's enough to have one of the family crying half the long day."

But, though Judy said this, she nevertheless felt certain that Miss Honor *had* been weeping, and bitterly accused herself for being the cause. "I wish my tongue had been in my pocket!" thought the faithful creature, "when I went to tell Miss Honor the spiteful remarks those *bastes* made on her whilst walking with the young officer.

She has a proud spirit of her own, and a good right she has to it, considering the ould family and rich Milesian blood she comes from; and sure 'twas enough to enrage and affront her to know that those who are not fit to tie her shoe should dare to take the liberty of speaking about her. And I to be such a good-for-nothing brute as to tell her! I deserve to be ducked under a pump, so I do, for my impudence in telling her such nonsense, but I declare to God above, I meant it all for the best."

"Judy, have a nice little chicken roasted for my darling's luncheon," said the anxious mother, "and a nice laughing potato quite hot."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And be sure, Judy, to have it on the table at one o'clock."

"To the minute, ma'am."

Honor attempted to say she knew she could not eat, but the tenderness of her mother melted her, and she burst into tears.

"Oh! my own child, my precious Honor, tell me where you suffer. Let me send for the doctor, and let me entreat you to go to bed."

Honor saw that, unless she made an effort to master her feelings, her mother, believing her to be seriously ill, would not leave her for a minute, wiped her tears away, and, forcing a smile, assured her parent that she really felt not the slightest indisposition, but had merely a little nervousness, which would soon subside if left quiet.

The luncheon was served to her at one o'clock, and to please her mother she ate a few morsels much against her inclination. She remained at home the whole day seated in the window, and saw, as evening came on, Mr. Hunter approach it, and drop a note on the window-sill. Her mother had left the room only two minutes before, so that Honor could raise the window, snatch the note, and devour its contents, which having done, she wrote two lines on the back of it to signify that, when it was dusk, she would let fall her packages into the street; and, at twelve o'clock, be ready to depart with her lover.

CHAPTER VI.

NEVER, perhaps, had Mrs. O'Flaherty shown more tenderness towards her daughter than on the day that was to be the last of their sojourn under the same roof; for the tears shed by Honor—a rare occurrence with her, whose spirits were peculiarly buoyant—had awakened an unusual interest and anxiety in the fond mother's breast. The high spirits and constant gaiety of Honor had often hitherto checked the demonstrations of Mrs O'Flaherty's overweening love. She was afraid of the loud laugh, or the oft-times-repeated phrase of "Mother, you want to fondle me as when I was a baby;" but to see Honor shed tears, and feel how warmly she returned her embraces, was something so new that, encouraged by these

indications of affection, she indulged in all the overflowing fondness of maternal love, as much surprised as delighted to find it so graciously received. It required a great effort on Honor's part to conceal her emotion when, before retiring to her chamber at night, she, as usual. kissed her mother. She longed to throw herself on her knees and entreat her blessing; but she mastered her agitation, and left her parent wholly unsuspicious of its existence.

"I don't know how it is, Judy," observed Mrs. O'Flaherty, as her faithful attendant assisted to change her day-clothes for those of night; "but I have felt more like what I used to feel when my daughter was a little child, this day, than I have for years; and she did not check me either, as she generally does, nor laugh at my doting tenderness. It seemed to me, Judy, as if she liked me better to-day than usual! If she behaved always to me in this gentle way, I'd be too fond of her; and yet I hardly know in what the difference in her consisted. It was a thing to be *felt*, but not described, Judy, and made me feel as if I could hold

her close to my breast and shed tears over her as I often did when she was a baby. Wasn't it strange, Judy, to see her shed tears?"

"Why, I must confess, ma'am, Miss Honor's not much given to crying. She's more in the laughing line; but young ladies *will* be young ladies; they are just for all the world like an April sky, showers and sunshine. But you mustn't be thinking about her now, ma'am, or you'll grow nervous and not be able to close your eyes for the night. I'll just run and make you a cup of gruel with a teaspoonful of whisky in it, and that will compose you nicely for a good night's rest."

"No, thank you, Judy, I'd rather not take anything. There are some thoughts that, though they are serious, one would not like to drive away, and I'll go to sleep remembering how fondly she returned my kiss to-day and to-night. The recollection does me good."

"Nothing will do you good that keeps you awake, ma'am, so don't be obstinate," said Judy, making her exit to prepare the

water-gruel, *malgré* all her mistress's repeated asseverations that she would rather not take any.

"God bless and protect my child this blessed night, and all others," prayed Mrs. O'Flaherty aloud, and with fervour. "May angels watch over her while she sleeps; and, when I behold her to-morrow, may the roses of health be restored to her cheeks and the lustre to her eyes!"

Honor, who had opened the door of her chamber to listen whether Judy had been dismissed for the night, heard her mother's prayer, and her heart beat quick and tears filled her eyes as she listened to it. She felt tempted to enter her mother's room to embrace her once more, but the approaching steps of Judy warned her to retreat, and she remained listening nervously to every sound, fearful that it might occur to Judy to come to her room, a not unfrequent practice of hers whenever she had anything to communicate. The thought made her turn the key of her chamber. The partition which separated her mother's room from Honor's was so thin that every word uttered in

either could be heard in the other, and Honor could distinctly hear Judy say, "Here, ma'am, is a nice cup of thin gruel for you."

"It smells strong, Judy, I'm sure you've put more than a teaspoonful of spirits in it, and that will give me a headache and make me ill."

"Is it me, ma'am, that would give you anything to make you ill? Faith it's not myself that would. I know better than to give the least drop more than the teaspoon, and that same hardly full. Take it, ma'am, if you please. I know if you don't you won't sleep to-night. See, ma'am, you've left half in the cup. Come, now, finish it, I won't let you alone till you do."

"Do you think, Judy, that my darling was unwell to-day?"

"Is it she, ma'am? Not a bit. I never saw her better."

"But why did she look so pale, Judy?"

"Perhaps it was that she was wishing to have a new dress for the next ball, ma'am; and little things like that often vexes a young lady, and makes her look pale, espe-

cially when she has no greater troubles to think of."

"Ah, Judy, if I had the means, my darling should be always the best dressed of all the young ladies; there's nothing I would deny her, for sure isn't she worthy of everything—so beautiful, so sprightly, and so elegant as she is?"

"Troth, ma'am; it's true for you, she's all that, and more, too; for, to my taste, she bates all the young ladies in the whole place. There's not one of 'em to be compared with *her*."

"Judy, you may take my black bombazine gown; it will make you a nice dress for Sundays."

"Thank you, ma'am, but I'd rather not at present."

"Why so, Judy?"

"Because it would look as if I only praised Miss Honor to get a present; when God, who sees my heart, knows that I think every word, ay, and much more into the bargain, than ever I said."

"I am sure you do, Judy; and I'm not the one to suspect you of flattery when you speak of my child; for, in my eyes, Judy,

she has no fault; she's only too b-e-a-u-t-i-f-u-l and too g-o-o-d;" and the doting mother dissolved into a flood of tenderness.

"There now, if you arn't crying, and all for nothing at all," said Judy. "Sure it's a sin and a shame for you to be making yourself ill, just because God has given you a beautiful and elegant young lady for a daughter."

"It's because I feel His goodness and her goodness, may the Almighty bless her!"

"Amen!" said Judy.

"She doesn't know, Judy, how I dote on her, or how often I pray for her. Sure she's all my comfort, all my hope in life, and she's the image of her poor dear father;" and here a fresh burst of tears interrupted the mother's words.

"Now, ma'am, I won't stay a minute longer; for once you begin to cry it's not aisy to stop you;" and Judy drew the bed curtains close, and withdrew, wishing her sobbing mistress "Good night and happy dreams." She stole with noiseless steps to Honor's door and tried to enter, but, finding it locked, muttered to herself, "I wanted

just to ask her pardon for vexing her by repeating the gossip of them bastes, but it will do as well to-morrow, for she's not one to lie down in anger, though I'm sure her paleness and her tears were all because of what I tould her. Botheration to me for a fool as I was, and bad luck to them spiteful, envious bastes that put it into my head;" and off went Judy to her attic to sleep away the fatigue and cares of the day.

"Poor Judy!" thought Honor. "She, too, loves me. O! my poor dear mother! How every word she uttered touched my heart! And I am leaving her without saying farewell! without imploring her blessing! How hard-hearted — how ungrateful she will think me! and yet I never loved her so well as at this moment. And to leave her for one who loves me not—who is incapable of loving—who only marries me to be amused! But I must not think It is now too late. I must only remember that I will be rich; and that I will have gold, though not love, by my marriage. Yes, mother, with all my faults—and I was never so sensible of them as at this moment—you shall find that your poor Honor will not forget nor neglect you."

A slight tap beneath the window warned Honor that the moment of departure was come. She gently raised the casement, and beheld Hunter, a woman, and a man (whom she justly concluded was his servant) standing close to the house. She threw out her packages, which were caught by the domestics; and then, putting on her cloak and bonnet, stealthily opened her door. She paused for a moment at that of her mother's chamber, and, by the sound of her heavy breathing, ascertained that she already slept; then, descending the stairs, she let herself out so noiselessly that she could not be heard, and, gently closing the door after her, in the next moment felt her hand grasped in that of Hunter.

"All is ready," said he. "But you weep, Honor! Why these tears?"

"Don't speak to me now, James. In a few minutes I shall be better."

Hunter drew her arm within his, and, as he felt it tremble, a sentiment more like affection than he had ever previously entertained for his future bride passed through his breast. "Poor thing!" thought he to himself, "she must have a good heart, too, to

weep for leaving such a dull woman as her mother, and such a disagreeable home."

In a few minutes, they reached the spot where Hunter's carriage was waiting, his horses pawing the ground in their impatience to advance; the step was let down, Honor handed in, her packages were placed in a large trunk fitted on behind, and Hunter was preparing to enter the carriage, when she reminded him that the woman, who was in the act of ascending the dickey, must take her place within. Hunter angrily told her to enter, and then, following her, the door was closed: his servant mounted the box, and, the words "All right" being uttered, the horses bounded on rapidly, and Honor leant back, and wept in silence for some time.

"Come, come, dear Honor, don't give way to low spirits. It's no use, and will put me into the blue devils. We can come back and see your mother whenever you like after we are married. Don't take up more room than you can, Mrs. Simkins, for the carriage was built to hold only two, but this lady wished to have you inside, instead of on the box. Suppose you take off your cloak, Mrs.

Simkins, for it fills up room, and I can throw it out of the window for your husband to take charge of."

The order was promptly obeyed.

"Ay, that's something better, but it's a horrid bore to have three persons in a carriage built only to hold two. How are you now, my dear Honor? Would you like to have another cushion at your back? Place this cushion behind the young lady, Mrs. Simkins. Are your feet cold, dear Honor? If they are, Mrs. Simkins can sit at the bottom of the carriage, and lay them on her lap, and rub them."

Mrs. Simkins immediately moved to fulfil this offer, but Honor prevented her, by assuring her admirer that she did not in the least suffer from the cold.

"Do you find the carriage easy, my dear Honor? It was built by Barker, the best coachmaker in London. I always have everything from the tiptop people, for I think it's no pleasure to have things if they are not the best that can be had. Don't you agree with me? Shall you mind crossing the sea? I hope you won't be sick. It's a devilish bore to be sea-sick, or see any one

so. Don't touch me if you can help it, Mrs. Simkins, for I hate being touched, except by—I won't say who, but you may guess, Honor,"

To every word Mr. Hunter addressed to Mrs. Simkins, her answer was, "Yes, please sir," or "Whatever you wish, Sir,"

"Hang me, Mrs. Simkins, if I don't think you have some lavender-water about you."

"Yes, please sir, I have a smelling-bottle with some, for I thought the young lady might, perhaps, want one, and so I put one into my pocket, sir."

"Fancy, my dear Honor, our being infected with lavender-water?"

"Very sorry, sir; beg your pardon, sir."

"Just take it from your pocket, and throw it out of the window."

"I beg pardon, sir, but if you would please to let me give it to my husband, for I wouldn't like to lose it, as it was given me by my mother."

Honor instantly felt a good will towards the woman who valued the gift of her mother, and interfered to save the smelling-bottle.

"But, I asure you, I can't stand the

smell of lavender-water," said Hunter, "it's so vulgar; no one uses it but servants going to a dance; and, if Mrs. Simkins gives it to her husband to keep, he'll smell of it, and, as he comes near, me when I am undressing I shall be incommoded."

"If you please, sir, the coachman could put it in his pocket for me," said Mrs. Simkins timidly.

"I'd much rather you threw it away altogether, and I will give you money to buy a new one."

"James, how can you? I will not have Mrs. Simkins lose the bottle given her by her mother," observed Honor impatiently, shocked and disgusted by every fresh proof of the selfishness of her future husband.

"Can't your mother give you another smelling-bottle?" inquired Hunter, addressing himself to the discomfited Mrs. Simkins.

"If you please, sir, she's dead," was the reply; and the frequent application of her handkerchief to her eyes for a few minutes after, with the sound of suppressed sobs, revealed that the poor woman was weeping.

Honor kindly pressed her hand, and Mrs. Simkins gratefully answered, "Thank you, Miss, thank you."

"Well, I wonder how any one can care a pin about what a mother gives one," remarked Hunter. "I'm sure I don't, for, though my mother has given me heaps of presents, I never keep them. Old women never have any taste; they always buy a pack of trumpery not worth having; and, except the diamond studs and sleeve-buttons my mother gave me, my last birthday but one, I have retained none of her gifts. I always say to her, 'Buy nothing for me, old girl, but give me in cash whatever you intended to lay out in a present, and then I can exercise my own taste.' The old lady gets offended, but she knows it's no use being cross with me, so she gave me, my last birthday, the £200 she meant to spend on a present, and I bought with it a devilish fine high-stepping horse. You'll have rare fun, Honor, when you see my mother and me together. The old girl thinks that I am the pink of perfection, and would kiss me fifty times a day if I'd let her; but I say, 'Nix, Mynheer, two kisses a day are as much as I can spare, and if more are wanted they must be well paid for.' That's my way of managing her, as you'll find."

A deep sigh from Mrs. Simkins revealed her disapprobation of the hardness of heart of her husband's master, and Honor thought better of her for it. At the first post, the horses were changed; the coachman was dismissed back to the regiment, warned to say nothing of any one's accompanying his master, on penalty of being discharged; and, with four post-horses, the carriage was whirled rapidly along, Hunter having promised a liberal remuneration to the postillions if they would advance at full speed. The velocity of the movement induced the travellers to sleep; but Honor was frequently awoke by the reproaches of Hunter accusing Mrs. Simkins of having interrupted his slumbers by touching him with her elbow, or shoulder, the poor woman humbly entreating pardon and expressing her regret.

"You may lean on my shoulder," whispered Honor, "I sha'n't at all mind it."

"Thank you, Miss, I am very much obliged to you, but it would be too great a liberty, I dare not."

"I insist, said Honor; and, when they were awoke by changing horses at the next post, Hunter remarked that he had enjoyed a

very comfortable sleep owing to Mrs. Simkins not having once touched him during the last twelve miles, which proved she might avoid it when she paid attention.

CHAPTER VII.

The reserve of Honor O'Flaherty during the route conciliated the respect of her humble companion, Mrs. Simkins. Honor, to the great horror of Mr. Hunter, insisted that she should be present at the repasts, and never allowed herself to be separated from her day or night. The journey and voyage were accomplished in as short a time as was possible, the marriage was duly solemnized at Gretna-green, after which an announcement of the fact was forwarded to several of the London papers, and a letter was addressed to his father and mother, by Mr. Hunter, stating the fact of his nuptials.

"My wife," wrote he, "is of one of the best families in Ireland, and, though she has no fortune, has refused a baronet with ten

thousand a year, for *my* sake. I'd have asked your consent before I proposed, only I knew you would not give it, and I thought you'd be more angry if I marrried after you had warned me not. The job is done. I am fairly married. I like my wife better than I ever did any one before; so it's no use being cross about it *now*, when it can't be undone. We shall start for England in an hour, and go direct to London, to the Clarendon, where, if you like to write to us to go to you, we will: but mind, no long lectures when we come. A good hearty kiss from my mother, and a hearty shake of the hands from you, father, and all will be well and right, with the addition of a pretty lively daughter-in-law for you both, that will make the great house gayer than it ever has been."

When Hunter had finished this unceremonious epistle, and handed it to his bride to read, she thought it so very free and easy that she wished him to write a more respectful one.

"No, no, Honor," observed he, "I know the old folk, and you don't, and I am well enough acquainted with their ways to be

quite sure that if I wrote an humble apology to them they would mount the high horse, and not receive us for two or three months, which would not be pleasant, as I shall be wanting money for a thousand things. We mustn't make ourselves too cheap, or they'll be for acting the grand; but we must behave as if we thought no blame could be found, and that what we have done was quite right and natural. All the governor's fortune is entailed on *me;* and, even if he were to refuse to receive us, and hold out in dudgeon, the Jews would advance me on post obits as much money as I may want. Therefore, mind, Honor, you don't knock under to either the governor, or the old girl. Keep your own dignity up with them from the first, and all will go well."

While Hunter was writing to his parents, Honor wrote a very affectionate letter to her mother, informing her of her marriage, and once more soliciting her pardon for having eloped. She enclosed the certificate of her marriage, gave some civil message from her husband, and held out the hope of soon going to Ireland to see her mother. Nor was the faithful Judy forgotten, for a kind remem-

brance to her was appended in the form of a postscript, with a reminder to take especial care of her mistress.

And now, by less rapid travelling, the bridegroom and "suite" (as the Scots paper announced it) proceeded towards England. Scotland once left behind, the high cultivation, the appearance of comfort and cleanliness, which met her eyes as they progressed, attracted all the bride's attention. The richly-wooded parks, and the noble herds of deer which roamed through them, the palatial mansions and picturesque castles beheld from the road, with the neat cottages and smiling gardens that fronted them by the side of it, delighted her; but a sigh agitated her heart as she contrasted these scenes of grandeur and the lowly ones of comfort, and compared them with her own less happy land, poor Ireland, with its stately dwellings deserted by the absent nobility, her gentry too embarrassed to preserve the air of good order which in every part of England pervades the abodes of the same class, and the wretched huts of the poor presenting a less comfortable aspect than the out-offices assigned to the cows and pigs of the English labourer. "My

poor, poor country," thought Honor, "when will you shake off the misery, the poverty, in which you so long have been steeped? When will you cease to be the poor, the neglected, the despised, and importunate relation of this rich, this luxurious land?"

Never previously had Honor bestowed a serious thought on the unhappy state of her native country. Accustomed to its poverty and want of civilization, the external marks of which were continually before her, her eyes had grown used to them; and it was only now when, for the first time, she beheld England—proud and happy England—that the contrast struck her so forcibly, that she learned to pity her own unhappy land. "Why, the very animals here are better off than the poor classes of human beings are with us," thought she. "No wonder those proud Englishmen despise and mock us; and yet in what are we inferior to them? Are our men less brave, our women less virtuous?"

"This is something like a country, Honor, isn't it?" observed Hunter, as he noticed how earnestly she gazed on the scenery around her. "You must allow this is different from Ireland? My own country never struck me before to

be so beautiful, because I had not seen yours. Now it looks like a rich garden, everything fresh and blooming. Here we see no dirty beggars, in squalid rags, whining for relief; no half-naked children screaming for food, to disgust one, and spoil the landscape."

"I see it all, I feel it, James; but, if you wish to make me a happy woman, a good wife, never taunt me about the poverty and misery of poor Ireland. I couldn't bear it; it gives me a choking feel, James; so don't let us speak of it."

The comfort, the cleanliness of the English inns, too, struck Honor with amazement; but the more ready was she to admit their advantages, the more did the contrast they offered to those in Ireland, so lately seen, mortify and shock her; and she never felt herself so thoroughly an Irishwoman as now, when reminded by everything around her of the vast superiority, the effect only of civilization, of one country over the other.

"With our grand mountains, our green hills, our clear and broad rivers, and our mild climate," thought Honor, "what might not Ireland become if the same advantages were given to her that are lavished on England!"

"Why, what the deuce are you thinking of, Honor?" said Hunter. You seem to have left all your gaiety and high spirits behind you in in the Emerald Isle, and have reserved no portion of them to enliven your poor husband, who is terribly menaced by an attack of the blue devils. It will be too bad if they seize on you, Honor, whom I thought capable of chasing away a whole regiment of them, and on whose aid to drive them from me I fully relied."

Honor smiled, but the smile was a faint one. She had become an altered woman, for reflection—only a recent guest, and introduced by new-born thoughts—had vanquished the levity and giddiness hitherto the leading features in her character; and, surprised by the change in her own mind, she found a charm in brooding over its newly-awakened powers. In the reflections that now occupied her, she forgot the vain and empty pleasures, the anticipation of which had tempted her to achieve a marriage with Hunter by means so unworthy that she blushed at the recollection. She had condescended to flatter a man of low intellect and uncultivated mind, in order to obtain riches, the

value of which, now that she had ensured a right to their possession, no longer offered the same temptation as before. A sentiment of shame, as new as it was painful, oppressed her.

As the folly and utter selfishness of her husband became more revealed to her by every observation he uttered, her sense of shame and self-reproach increased, that for such a man, or rather for his wealth, she could have humiliated herself to accomplish a marriage which she knew he really did not form from affection, but solely as a defence from *ennui*. These reflections absorbed the new-made wife, and precluded an attempt, even had the desire existed, to amuse her husband. And he, tired of his own thoughts, or more probably the absence of all thought, as well as offended by Honor's silence and grave countenance, resigned himself to slumber, or indulged in cigar after cigar, after having offered his companion one of these delectable little instruments said by the dull to produce Lethean forgetfulness, and by the man of genius to assist cogitation.

Although the disgusting odour was odious to her, and that she turned with loathing

from the noisome vapour that filled the carriage, infecting her clothes, and even her hair, she made it a case of conscience to make no complaint; for, had she not often in Ireland, when seeking to secure Hunter's hand, allowed him to believe that she would make no objection to this, his favourite recreation? And therefore, however and whatever she now suffered, she would not deprive him of this pleasure, though a faintness came over her several times never previously experienced, Once she let down the glass, to breathe the fresh air; but the movement awoke her slumbering companion, who instantly requested her to draw up the glass, alleging that he always took cold if either of the windows was open.

At the inns where the traveller stopped to dine, Hunter did ample justice to the repasts, while pronouncing them to be utterly unworthy of his approbation, and washed them down with such copious draughts of wine, that the sudden but brief elevation of spirits which ensued was sure to be followed by a lethargic slumber on a sofa, or chair, the soundness of which was evidenced by certain nasal sounds, loud enough to be heard in the

adjoining rooms and passages. Honor would, on these occasions, employ Mrs. Simkins to procure her the loan of a book from the mistresses of the inns to pass away the weary hours, and for the first time began to find that reading was a great resource from painful thoughts, or *ennui*. "I wish," she would say to herself, "I could give *him* this resource, but I fear it is hopeless to make the attempt."

"My wife is not at all the pleasant companion I expected," thought Hunter; "but I must say she is devilish good-natured, and lets me do as I like; and how few brides would do this! I can't think what has changed her so much since she left her home, where she used be as gay as a lark, and as playful as a squirrel. I suppose travelling doesn't agree with her, which I regret, as I like moving about; but she'll get used to it in time."

Long and tedious to Honor was the journey to London, and heartily did she rejoice when it was over. Established in one of the best suites of rooms in the Clarendon, and surrounded by every comfort and luxury that wealth can command, she hoped to recover

from the fatigue of travelling, and the deleterious effect of the tobacco smoke, from which her health had already suffered. But the morning following their arrival two letters were received by Hunter from his parents, which destroyed the hope of his wife of enjoying a few days' repose, of which she stood so much in need, as they announced the intention, on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, senior, of arriving in London the next day. Hunter perused the letters, and then threw them on the table to Honor. "I thought," said he "the governor and the old girl wouldn't hold out long against us. I wish they hadn't given in for a week or so, that we might have enjoyed our liberty in London, instead of being dragged down to Wintern Abbey, or Westminster Abbey, as I sometimes call it, on account of its being so dull."

The contents of the paternal and maternal letters were as follow :—

"JAMES,

"Knowing as you did my objection to early marriages, contracted when a young fellow cannot know his own mind, and has not

experience to guide his choice, I think I had reason to be both surprised and vexed when I heard of your ill-advised marriage, and to a person, too, whom you acknowledge has no fortune. You have proved yourself totally wanting in prudence, and will, probably, have ample cause to repent your folly, ere long. As what you have done cannot be undone, we must make the best of it, however angry we feel; and, to give your runaway marriage an appearance of respectability, we will come up to town, have you decently re-married in our presence, to show that we sanction it, and then bring you and your wife down here. I could more readily forgive you for marrying a woman of any other country than Ireland, always excepting France; but, as it can't now be helped, it's no use thinking of it; and so I remain, your disappointed but affectionate father,

"JAMES HUNTER."

Honor's cheek grew red as she perused the illiberal reflection on her country, but she made no remark, and, laying the letter quietly down, took up the maternal one:—

"JAMES," wrote Mrs. Hunter, "you have

pretty nigh broken my heart. To go and marrry God knows who, without leave or licence; an Hirish girl, too, and most likely a Papist. Oh! James, what could you be thinking of? I hoped you would marry some helegant young lady of title that would be an onor to the family, and who would bring at least enough fortin to pay her way, instead of which you ran away with one of the wild Hirish, a set of people I never could abide, and you make me miserable. But mind one thing, James—though we forgive you now, because it is our duty as Christins. We never will have O'Connell, nor any of his tail coming to our house to keep up a hagitation in our house and to hatch another Popish plot to burn us all in our beds. I'm afraid your wife can be no better than she should be, to run hoff with you in the way she has done, for no well-behaved young lady would consent to helope.

"I dare say, if the truth was known, it wasn't so much your fault, my poor boy; but those wild Hirish women are capable of carrying hoff any man. Hadn't I an Hirish woman in my kitchen once, and don't I know what they are like? I send you a check

for a couple of hundred pounds, that you may buy your wife some decent clothes before your father sees her, and try to keep up the respectability of the family. Have her well-dressed without a moment's delay, for I wouldn't on any account have our servants see her in her Hirish houtlandish fashions. I hope, my poor boy, you haven't caught cold running a wild-goose chase to Scotland. If you have, I never will forgive this Hirishwoman. So no more at present from your unhappy, but affectionate mother,

"SARAH HUNTER."

CHAPTER VIII.

When poor Mrs. O'Flaherty descended to breakfast the morning after her daughter's departure, great was her surprise, and greater still her alarm, when she found that Honor had not made her appearance.

"Have you been to her room, Judy?"

"Faith and I have, ma'am, twice, and I knocked and knocked, but, as no one said come in, I thought Miss Honor might not have slept well in the night, and was now making up for it."

"Go, Judy, go to her room; be sure you make no noise, but just peep through the opening of the curtains, and see how my darling is."

Judy ascended the stairs, remained absent only a minute, and then returned as pale as

death, her eye-lids distended, and her frame trembling.

"What's the matter, Judy? What makes you tremble and look so pale?" inquired the anxious mother, now become more pale and terrified than her servant.

"What's the matter?" reiterated Judy. "Sure how do I know what's the matter? All I do know is, that Miss Honor is not in her room, has not slept in her bed, which is just as I left it last night when I turned down the sheet."

"My child! my poor child!" exclaimed Mrs, O'Flaherty, sinking into a chair, and fainting.

'Oh, botheration, isn't it enough to dhrive any one on earth slap out of their senses, if they had fourteen instead of seven?" said Judy, bursting into a passion of tears. "The daughter gone off, God alone knows where; and the mother, God be good to the poor demented crater, fainting away as dead as a herring! What on earth will I do to get her out of this fit?" And Judy ran away to get feathers to burn under the nose of her mistress, which having done, she rubbed her hands and sprinkled her face with water.

"Murder! murder!" cried Judy, the tears running down her face, "did any one ever see such a strong weakness? Ma'am, ma'am, come to yourself a bit! Just open your eyes! She doesn't move, she doesn't hear me—it's all up with her. Oh, wirristhrew, this is a sorrowful day!"

Judy put her hand to her brow for a moment, and then rushed off, returning with incredible speed with a bottle of whisky in her hand, and, dropping a little of it into a cup, she seized a spoon, and, forcing the clenched teeth of her mistress open, she poured a portion of the spirit down her throat. "If anything will bring her to herself it will be this," said Judy, "for I never knew it to fail with gentle or simple."

Her prediction was verified: the unhappy mother, half-suffocated, was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and suspended animation was restored. It was several minutes, however, before she could speak; but, when able to utter a word, she demanded to be supported to her daughter's room; nor could all the entreaties of Judy avail to change her determination, though hardly able, even with her aid, to carry it into execution. With

slow and trembling steps she ascended the stairs, and entered the chamber; but the sight of the empty bed, which had not been pressed, and the cold and dreary aspect of the deserted room, appealed so strongly to her feelings that a violent flood of tears relieved her heart from the oppressive load of grief that lay like a weight of lead on it, and she wept long and silently. She then looked around, and saw on the table a letter directed to herself. With trembling hands, she tore open the cover, and Judy rushed down to the sitting-room for her mistress's spectacles, little less anxious to know the contents of the letter than her to whom it was addressed.

"Oh, Judy, Judy!" sobbed the unhappy mother, after reading the letter, "she loved me better than I thought; I can't be angry with her, try all that I can, for there is too much love for her in my heart to leave any room for anger." Again and again the letter was read over, and many were the tears that fell on it. "I was too proud of her," sobbed Mrs. O'Flaherty, "and God has punished me by humbling me in the only thing of which I was vain."

"Arragh, don't kill yourself with grief,

misthis mavourneen! Sure, though she is gone, and without leave or licence, which is a pity, she'll be sure to come back a married lady, rich and grand, and then you'll forget this throuble, and be happier than ever you were before, to see her settled in life, and in grandeur."

"But, to elope, Judy, to go off alone, without so much as a decent honest woman to keep her in countenance. Oh! Judy, I'm ashamed of her, and the hot blush of shame goes up to my forehead. No one but a mother can know what it is to have to blush for a daughter's shame!"

"But it will be all over when she is married, and people will forget it. Sure, if one gets safely into a church, no one will care whether she got in through the door, or the window."

"Yes, Judy, every one will think the worse of her, and the parents of her husband can never have any esteem for her."

"Is it them? faith she'll teach 'em better; for Miss Honor isn't one to allow people to trate her with disrespect. You'll see she'll soon get the whip-hand of her people in law, as she did with us, ma'am, and have everything all her own way."

"But the neighbours, Judy, all the people in the town, and Lady Fitzgerald and her daughters, and the Countess O'Neill and Miss Grace. Oh! Judy, what will they say, what will they think, and how shall I ever look in their face again?" And then poor Mrs. O'Flaherty's tears fell afresh.

"Those that you value won't turn their backs on you, ma'am, I'll be bound, but be as kind and friendly as ever, and maybe more so, when they see you left alone."

This last sentence was an ill-chosen one, and renewed the tears of the deserted mother. "Alone! alone!" repeated she, "that's it, Judy, true for you, I'm left alone sure enough;" and she sobbed in agony.

"It will only be for a short time, ma'am, you may be sure; for Miss Honor will be soon back, covered with the finest silks, satins, and laces, and with diamonds that will beat out hollow all that was ever seen in Ireland, except the Lady Lieutenant's."

"Oh! Judy, if her father, God rest his soul in Heaven, was alive, what would he say, what would he do? He'd blame me for all this; for he had a way of blaming me for everything, and would pull the house about

my ears. It frightens me, Judy, to think what he would do."

"What a mercy it is, ma'am, that he's gone to Heaven, and that you are safe from his anger!"

"Don't say such a thing, Judy, don't say such a thing; wouldn't I put up with all his rage and bad usage to have him alive again; and haven't I been crying night and day ever since I lost him?"

"True for you, ma'am, and, by what you have told me, you cried night and day while you had him, he used to bother and bate you so; so you see, ma'am, whether you cried because he never let you alone, or have cried because he wasn't alive to torment you, it comes much to the same thing; only, for my part, I think it's better to have to cry because a husband is dead, than because he is alive to break one's heart."

"Judy, you don't know what it is to be a wife;" and again Mrs. O'Flaherty's tears were renewed.

"Thanks be to God for that same, ma'am!" replied Judy; "but now, ma'am, come down and have a bit of breakfast; a cup of tea will do you good."

"Don't talk to me of eating, Judy."

"Well, ma'am, perhaps a drop of dhrink would do you more good?"

"I can neither eat nor drink."

"Then that's wrong, ma'am, and sinful, too. You want strength to bear your troubles, and how can you have it if you starve yourself? I'll be bound Miss Honor has had a good breakfast before this, and why shouldn't *you?*"

This last argument seemed to produce some effect on Mrs. O'Flaherty, for she allowed herself to be led down stairs by Judy, and consented to partake of a very small portion of the breakfast provided for her.

"I'm sure, Judy, 'twas the thought of going away that made my darling look so pale yesterday. Do you remember that she shed tears? And she showed more love to me, Judy, than usual."

All reminiscences of her daughter (and they were numerous) brought tears to the eyes of the poor mother.

"I'll let her cry her fill," said Judy to herself, "for 'twill ease her poor heart, and, as she's used to crying, it won't hurt her so much as it might other people. I must pre-

pare to meet inquisitive people who will be throwing themselves in my way to ask questions. How I'd like to blow 'em up, instead of gratifying their curiosity! I'll let no one in to the misthis, unless it be some of her real friends, who come to comfort and not to bother her, poor old lady; and I'll get a nice little bit of dinner for her, and make her eat it, ay, and make her drink a glass of wine after. I'm vexed downright to think of how pleased that sarpent, Biddy White, will be when she hears the news, and how she'll go on *belouring** it to every one that goes into her shop. Many a shilling's worth she'll sell on the strength of giving the particklars, the old chate, when she knows not half so much as I do, and that's little enough. But, I'll pretend to know everything, and that will make the runaway appear more respectable. I'll shake my head and look wise, and give a half smile, and say my young lady will come back a richer lady than any in the county. I'm only a poor servant, so 'twill do me no harm to pretend to know more than I do; but it's better that the misthis should let all the world know that *she* was

* Publishing it, making it known.

not in the secret, that spiteful people shouldn't be able to say she encouraged the elopement."

Such were the reflections of Judy, while doing all in her power to comfort her mistress,—one of the methods adopted, and in which she had most faith, being the presenting various little dainties to tempt her appetite, and relating to her all the gossip she had heard during the last ten days. She felt surprised, but pleased, that no visitors came that day—"a sure sign, thought Judy, that nothing is yet known, so we have a clear day before us."

In the evening, however, Patrick O'Donohough brought some fruit from the Countess O'Neill, with her compliments to know how the ladies did. Judy narrowly scrutinized his countenance when he delivered the message, to ascertain whether he was still ignorant of the recent event in the family; but the calmness of its expression, and the unconcernedness of his manner, convinced her he was. She had been longing to make the Countess O'Neill acquainted with the event, for she well knew that from that lady and her amiable grand-daughter her poor mis-

tress would meet with ready sympathy and kindness in her troubles; but, not knowing how to write, and not wishing to leave her mistress alone in the house, she had no means of making known to the Countess the state of affairs. This now presented itself through the medium of Mr. Patrick O'Donohough, well known for his tact and discretion, and Judy determined to avail herself of it. She related to him all that she knew, and all that she surmised, not without tears that her young lady should have condescended to elope with any man, were he even a king, let alone an officer, who, though by all accounts as rich as the Bank of Ireland, ought to be too proud and honoured to beg the hand of Miss O'Flaherty, without carrying her off as if he was afraid his family would not consent to his marrying her openly in the presence of all the grandees in the neighbourhood, with Miss O'Neill and the young ladies from Ballymacross Castle for bridesmaids.

The worthy Patrick was surprised and grieved at the intelligence. "It was a pity," he said, "that young ladies, and particularly those of the real old Milesian blood, hadn't

a greater respect for themselves than to take such foolish steps; but it couldn't be helped, and all that remained was to make the best of it. He hoped there would be no delay to the marriage; *that* was now the first thing to be thought of."

"Troth, Mr. Patrick, Miss Honor's not the one to allow of any delay. Once she had committed the fault of going off, I am sure that Miss Honor wouldn't let any man put off marrying her; no, not for half an hour. I've known her since she first opened her eyes in this sinful world, Mr. Patrick," continued Judy; "and, though she may be giddy, and too much given to walk about and flirt with the redcoats, only let one of them offer the least affront, or attempt so much as to kiss the tips of her fingers, and I'll go bail Miss Honor would bring him to his senses, and have him on his knees to ask her pardon before five minutes were over."

Patrick's only observation was, that it would be better for young ladies never to give gentlemen an opportunity of affronting them.

"You'll tell the Countess of our troubles,

Mr. Patrick, and then I'm sure she'll do or say something to comfort the poor old mis-this, who is half demented."

"Certainly, Mrs. Judy, and now will you just step up with the fruit, and give the Countess's compliments, and I'll wait until your return."

The sight of the fruit and the delivery of the message produced new tears from her for whom they were brought.

"Did Mr. Patrick himself bring them, Judy?" inquired she.

"Indeed, ma'am, he did, and wouldn't go away until he heard how you were, ma'am, and whether you had any message for the Countess."

"Tell him, Judy, what has happened, and let him give my compliments to the Countess and Miss O'Neill, for I'm not able to write, my hand shakes so terribly, and bid him tell them that I hope they won't think too hardly of my poor misguided child, who left a very affectionate letter behind her for me, and that I trust they will come and see me as soon as convenient."

Within a little more than an hour from the receipt of this message, the Countess

O'Neill was seated by the disconsolate mother, saying all that her good-nature could suggest to console and comfort her; nor would she leave her until Mrs. O'Flaherty consented to accompany her home, and take up her abode with her for the present, accompanied by the faithful Judy.

"Why should I throw a gloom over your dwelling, my kind friend?" said Mrs. O'Flaherty. "No, leave me here to weep alone."

"A few days will, I trust in God, bring you good tidings of Honor; and, when her marriage is announced, and your mind more at rest, you can return to your home."

The helpless poor woman removed to the Countess O'Neill's, where Grace, ever kind and amiable, joined with her mother in soothing her unhappy guest.

"It was to be, Judy," said Mrs. O'Flaherty that night as her servant assisted to undress her. "Didn't I see a ring in the candle very often lately, and didn't sparks fly out of the fire, which always denotes money; and, if the young officer is as rich as people say, money will, I dare say, come to our house."

"Let Miss Honor alone for thinking of

you, ma'am. I'll be bound she'll take good care you don't want for anything that she can give you."

"Ah, poor darling! perhaps the sea is between her and me this moment, Judy—the wide, wide sea." And tears rolled down Mrs. O'Flaherty's pale face. "Every time this evening that I looked in Miss O'Neill's face, Judy, my heart felt ready to break. There she was by her grandmother's side, where a good and dutiful daughter ought to be—so mild, so gentle, so fond, while my poor Honor was flying with a stranger, a man she didn't know a short time since, and leaving her poor mother to bear alone the shame and scandal of her conduct. Oh! what would her poor father say if he was alive? I tremble to think of it."

CHAPTER IX.

The precautions taken by Mr. James Hunter to prevent the elopement being known in —— succeeded very well, for the two days following it—so well that to even Miss White, the milliner—so celebrated for the speedy acquisition of news, and, above all, scandalous news, and for the active dissemination of it—it was still a secret. She had, it is true, heard that Mr. Hunter had gone on leave of absence, which, if she regretted it on account of the loss of the money he was in the daily habit of fooling away in her shop, she was in part consoled for it by the mortification and disappointment his departure would occasion Honor O'Flaherty. "Well, *she's* disappointed, however," said the spiteful spinster to one of her cronies; "and

all her *tête-à-tête* walks by the river-side have produced no effect, except to get her talked of for her want of decorum in taking them. I hate such bold and masculine girls, and am glad when their schemes to catch a husband fail."

"You shouldn't be too hard upon the poor girls," was the reply; "for they couldn't run about with young men as they do if their parents didn't let them. Whenever I see a foolish young creature allowed by her mother to go gadding about in search of a husband, it reminds me of our poor people turning out their cows and their pigs from their own field to wander in those of their neighbours in search of food, a line of conduct which they term 'turning out the poor bastes to gain their own livelihood.'"

The secret, so well kept for two days, ceased to be one on the third; for an inhabitant of —— encountered Mr. Hunter's carriage on the road, and recognised in it Honor O'Flaherty. The news he related spread like wildfire through the town and neighbourhood. It was, to use Judy's words, "in every one's mouth." Many blamed, but few pitied, the poor mother, though most, if

not all, pronounced her to be so weak and foolish a person as to be utterly incapable of taking care of herself, and much more incapable of looking after a sprightly, dashing girl like her daughter, who was bent on marrying the first rich man she could catch. One might have supposed that the well-known folly and weakness of Mrs. O'Flaherty might have disarmed her detractors, or at least mitigated their censure. But such was not the case; for, had she possessed the wisdom of Solomon himself, and the prudence attributed to Penelope, she could not be more hardly judged than by those who pronounced her to be almost an idiot. Every error of omission, or commission, of which Honor was ever accused or suspected, was now raked up from the stores of memory for the spiteful comments of those who had known her from her cradle. Each individual of her own sex declared that *she* had always foretold that no good could come to a girl who made fun of her acquaintance, quizzed their dresses and themselves, and walked about with gentlemen without a chaperone.

The slight wounds sometimes unintentional

tionally inflicted on her acquaintances by Honor were now all recalled to mind, and the unthinking girl found rigid censors, instead of good-natured excusers of her conduct, in her neighbours. Some persons shook their heads, and asserted that they "had reason to know that Mr. Hunter's intentions towards her had not been honourable." Others said that, "if they had, there would be no reason for the elopement;" and people "wondered how the Countess O'Neill, a woman so remarkable for decorum and high principle, should have taken Mrs. O'Flaherty to her house, after the daughter of the latter had so terribly compromised herself." All, however, thought it right, as the Countess O'Neill received her, to call on Mrs. O'Flaherty to see how she bore it, "and to hear what she had to say;" but their curiosity was defeated by the Countess O'Neill's giving instructions to Patrick O'Donohough to admit no visitors, except Lady Fitzgerald, until further orders, an injunction to which he strictly attended. The family coach of Ballymacross Castle stopped at the door of Mrs. O'Flaherty the very day (the fourth from the elopement) on which the news reached there, and, the loud

knocks of the footman bringing no one to open the door, a neighbour advanced to state that Mrs. O'Flaherty had removed to the Countess O'Neill's.

"Drive there immediately!" said the mistress of the coach, with one of her most stately airs; and off drove the vehicle. This visit produced a certain effect on the minds of the good folk of ——. "If Lady Fitzgerald and the Countess O'Neill evinced so warm an interest in Mrs. O'Flaherty, and paid her such marked attention in her troubles, other people must not have the appearance of neglecting her; and if, after all, Honor O'Flaherty should return Mrs. Hunter, a rich woman, there would be no reason why she should not be well received, especially when it was seen that the tip-top people in the town and neighbourhood did not forsake her mother.

The length of Lady Fitzgerald's visit was remarked, and the inhabitants of the opposite house, who peered from behind the muslin curtains of their windows, declared that they saw Lady Fitzgerald embrace the distressed mother more than once in the Countess O'Neill's drawing-room, and hold her hand in hers for a considerable time.

While the elderly ladies were conversing together in the said drawing-room, the Misses Fitzgerald walked in the garden with Grace O'Neill. "What a painful event!" remarked Miss Fitzgerald: "I really pity the poor mother."

"I must say, I always thought Honor O'Flaherty a wild girl; but I never considered her a designing one before," added Miss Kate.

"We must not judge her too severely, observed Grace O'Neill, "for the poor girl had not the advantage that we have had in the care of a sensible and devoted mother, poor Mrs. O'Flaherty, though a very well-disposed person, being utterly incapable of taking a proper charge of so high-spirited and self-willed a girl as her daughter. Her helplessness, poor woman, entitles her to our pity; and Honor, too, with all her thoughtlessness, has a good heart. I trust her ill-advised *escapade* will turn out better than might be expected, and that the large fortune of Mr. Hunter will gain her a respectable position."

"I hope so, too, though I confess I was hurt at finding her guilty of a falsehood, of

which I had not thought her capable," said Miss Fitzgerald. "My mother, you are aware, wrote to your grandmother, dear Grace, to announce my engagement to Sir Henry Travers." Grace nodded assent. "And, would you believe it, when Miss White, the milliner, came to Ballymacross Castle the day before yesterday, with her stock of silks for me to select from, she positively told me that she was very glad my approaching marriage would disprove the foolish report circulated by Miss O'Flaherty, that she had recently refused an offer of the hand of Sir Henry Travers? Now this report is extremely annoying, and, being wholly untrue, must have originated with Honor. Indeed, Miss White said that one of the officers told her that Honor showed the letter of proposal to Mr. Hunter."

The lost letter of proposal for herself from the Baronet instantly occurred to Grace, and now she remembered that she had left Honor in the room where the Countess O'Neill only a few minutes before had placed the letter, and whence it had disappeared. It was now clear *who* had taken it, and Grace felt a harsher sentiment towards Honor than she

had ever previously experienced against any one. The meanness, the cunning, of surreptitiously obtaining the letter, and making use of it for her own purposes, were so unworthy, that she could not pass over it; but she nevertheless had generosity and tact enough to conceal her thoughts on the subject.

"How ashamed she must feel!" observed Miss Kate Fitzgerald, "when she returns here to find Florence Lady Travers!"

"And how confront Sir Henry, after having so impertinently made use of his name?" remarked Miss Fitzgerald. "He was perfectly enraged when I told him the report. 'What!' said he, 'could people be such fools as to credit such a thing for a moment? A girl I always particularly disliked! A creature full of levity, and so addicted to the low, vulgar habit of mimicking and quizzing! I would just as soon have thought of marrying one of the strolling actresses belonging to the company who acted here last year!'"

"That was going a little too far," observed Miss Kate; "for, after all, Honor O'Flaherty is of a very old and respectable family."

"A person who does not respect herself cannot expect others to respect her," said the future Lady Travers sententiously, and with an air of great dignity; "and, with Sir Henry's extreme delicacy of taste, one cannot wonder that he should feel greatly hurt at being even suspected of a preference for such a girl. Indeed, he has assured me that, until his attachment for me, which I now find has been of long date, he never dreamt of marriage: a proof of his fastidiousness peculiarly gratifying to me, as I should extremely dislike marrying a man who had been rejected by any other person."

Grace O'Neill was disposed to smile, but she checked the inclination, and a summons from Lady Fitzgerald for her daughters to join her called them away.

"I must claim you, dear Grace, as one of my bridesmaids," said Miss Fitzgerald; "and I hope you will be a frequent, as I know you will be a a welcome, guest at the hall."

Anxiously did the poor mother of Honor O'Flaherty count the hours until intelligence could reach her of the marriage of her daughter. "Oh!" would she exclaim to herself in the silence of night, when sleep fled

from her pillow, "if *he* should prove a deceiver, and not marry my poor Honor! I try to keep up my spirits before the Countess and her good grand-daughter, as if I had no doubt at all about the marriage, for I'd be ashamed to show them my fears, or my trouble, because it would make 'em more angry against Honor; but, while I'm endeavouring to seem calm and easy, I'm on thorns for my poor child;—not that I doubt her virtue, no, God be thanked! *that* bitter thought hasn't pierced my heart; but, what I *do* fear is, that Mr. Hunter, seeing how she deceived me, her doting mother, and made herself so cheap as to elope with him, careless of her good name, may reflect on all this, and refuse to marry her. Such things *have* happened, and men have been base enough, before now, to refuse to fulfil their engagements with the unhappy girls who trusted them! Who would believe Honor's innocence, if she came back unmarried? No one, but her poor heart-broken mother! But Honor never would come back, if she did not return a wife! Her pride would make her prefer death! Oh! my child, my child! how could you bring such misery on me as I have endured the last four days?"

Fortunately for the reason and, perhaps, for the life of Mrs. O'Flaherty, a letter from Honor to her mother arrived, announcing that she was now Mrs. James Hunter. The tone of the letter betrayed none of the triumphant exultation that might have been expected from the writer at the crowning of the scheme for which she had taken such pains and so compromised her dignity, while the affectionate feeling expressed towards her mother spoke in her favour. Perhaps it is one of the punishments allotted to the accomplishment of all schemes unworthily attained, that, however successful, something seems wanting to complete the happiness anticipated from them. To become the wife of the rich Mr. Hunter appeared to Honor O'Flaherty, a few weeks before, the object of all her aims and wishes; and, now this point was gained, she felt little elated, for conscience told her this good, if good indeed it might be deemed, had been achieved by deceptive appearances of attachment on her side, and by unworthy falsehoods. Something of this heaviness of heart breathed in her letter, and, as her mother read it over and over again, she became sensible of it.

"One might think, Judy," said she, after having read it aloud to her servant, "that my darling wasn't so overjoyed as I thought she would be when her marriage was over."

"Perhaps so, ma'am; but shure it's like most other things. When we have been expecting great pleasure from 'em for a long time, they come, and we find they're not at all such fine things as we thought they'd be. Shure isn't there myself? I was longing to have the gown I bought last year. Every time I passed the shop-window where it was laid, I used to say to myself, 'There it is, how happy I'd be if I had it!" and at last when I bought it—would you believe it, ma'am?—after three days, I thought to myself, 'Well, if I had my money back, I wouldn't buy this same gown, for it does not at all give me the satisfaction I looked for.'"

The letter was shown to the Countess O'Neill, who was heartily glad that the marriage had taken place, and warmly congratulated Mrs. O'Flaherty. "A weight of fear and shame is removed from my heart," said the latter; "but the pride I always expected to feel whenever my daughter made a good match is quite poisoned by the thought of

how it was done, and the dread that her husband may undervalue her hereafter, if not now, for having eloped with him. I'm not a clever woman, nor an experienced one, Countess, but I know that the man for whom a woman takes a false step is generally the first person to despise her for it. But, I'll pray night and day for the Almighty in His mercy to look down upon my poor erring child, and to put it into her heart to atone for the false step she has made, by steadiness and good conduct for the future; and, who knows but He, who scorns not the prayers of the most humble and ignorant, may grant mine? To see Honor a good wife and mother, respected by her husband and his family, would best console me for what has happened, and heal the wound in my heart."

It is seldom that the monotony of a country town is enlivened in one week by the stirring incidents of "An approaching marriage in high life," and "An elopement in the fashionable world," as the London papers have it. This, however, occurred; and proportionably great was the sensation the news excited. If the announcement of the approaching nuptials of Sir Henry Travers,

Bart., of "The Hall," with the lovely, amiable, and accomplished daughter of Sir Geoffrey and Lady Fitzgerald (for ladies on the eve of marriage are invariably pronounced by the newspapers, at least, to be lovely, amiable, or accomplished, and sometimes all these, however different they may happen to be in their qualities) occasioned general surprise, what was the astonishment created two days after by the intelligence of the elopement of the rich Mr. Hunter and the handsome Miss O'Flaherty? Gay, coquettish, and giddy as Honor was known to be, she had been considered too wise—that is to say, too worldly-minded—however anxious to secure a husband, to take so bold and unusual a step as an elopement to achieve her project. Folks marvelled, shook their heads, made various prophecies on the probable and improbable results of such a proceeding, *hoped* she might not have cause to rue it, but *feared* she should.

The fact related by the individual who had met the fair Honor and Mr. Hunter on the road, that they were accompanied by a female, was accepted as *une circonstance atténuanté* in the crime against propriety com-

mitted by Honor, and wagers ran high, and odds, in sporting phraseology, were given and taken, as to the chances for or against Mr. Hunter's marrying her. People seemed to calculate more on Honor's own resolution and spirit for having the hymeneal knot securely tied, than on Mr. Hunter's sense of honour; and while, as has been already stated, Mrs. O'Flaherty and her faithful *suivante*, Judy, were safely lodged beneath the hospitable roof of the Countess O'Neill, her daughter's *escapade* furnished the sole topic of conversation, throwing into shade the approaching nuptials of Sir Henry Travers and Miss Fitzgerald, which, without the elopement, would have set all tongues wagging. Nothing is so vexatious for persons who like to occupy public attention—and such fools are not rare—as at the very moment they announce some event connected with themselves which they hope will make a great sensation, to have something still more stirring start up, and supersede that which they furnished. Sir Henry Travers and the Fitzgeralds felt this vexatious *contretemps*, and it influenced not a little the severity of their strictures on Honor's conduct. Neverthe-

less, their annoyance did not prevent the ladies of Ballymacross Castle, as we have shown elsewhere, from hastening to condole with the distressed mother, and to obtain all the intelligence they could of the elopement.

A few days after, a letter from Mrs. James Hunter announced to her mother that her marriage had been solemnized, with all due ceremony, in London, in the presence of the parents of her husband, beneath whose roof she was now residing, and from whom she experienced every kindness and attention. The satisfaction of Mrs. O'Flaherty could only be equalled by that of the faithful Judy; and so wholly was she engrossed by these good tidings, that the announcement contained in the letter, of a case of wedding gifts having been despatched from London for her, was wholly overlooked, until the third or fourth perusal of the letter, when, grown more calm and collected, it was noticed. The case soon after arrived, laden with costly presents. Nor was Judy forgotten; for a bonnet, cloak, and two silk gowns, fit, as Judy declared, "for the Lady Lieutenant herself," were addressed to her.

A bank post-bill for a larger amount that Mrs. O'Flaherty had ever dreamt of possessing accompanied the other gifts, and with it was folded up a certificate of the English marriage of her daughter, witnessed by Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, Senior,—a document infinitely more prized by her than the money. "Now, now, I can sleep once more!" said she, "if, indeed, joy and gratitude to God will let me."

CHAPTER X.

JUDY, having unpacked the case and exhibited its valuable contents to her mistress, observed, "Why, ma'am, you don't seem half so pleased as I expected at getting such elegant presents. I'd lay a wager there's not in all Ireland any lady that has anything to compare with them."

"Ah! Judy, I am thinking of my darling, and not of her gifts. I'd rather have one look at her than all the presents in the world."

"Faith, I believe you, ma'am; for, though I was never a mother myself, seeing I was never married, I can guess what a mother's feelings must be when she receives such presents and elegant letters from a daughter married to a rich gentleman like Mr.

Hunter: God bless him, and long may he reign over her, though, unless she greatly change, I think it's her that will reign over him; for she was always given to take her own way, and shure hasn't everything proved she has a good head of her own?"

"Oh! Judy, I'm too, too hap-py," and here Mrs. O'Flaherty's tears began to flow; "and I can't help thinking that if her poor de-a-r fa-th er was alive—Oh! oh!"

"Shure, ma'am, he's better off in Heaven, and it's sinful for you to be wishing him back on earth."

"True for you, Judy, but I forget it."

"I'm thinking it is he that would soon make you wish him back in Heaven, ma'am, if he could just spend one evening with you."

The English newspapers gave the particulars of the marriage of "James Hunter, Esq., only son of James Hunter, Esq, of Grosvenor Square, and of Wintern Abbey and Allerton Park, in Derbyshire, to Miss O'Flaherty, a young Irish lady of distinguished family, and of great personal beauty and accomplishments," without omitting a single detail of the ceremony having been

performed by an archbishop, and in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, Senior, who had presented the fair bride with the most splendid gifts on the occasion. The Irish papers copied the paragraph, so that the topic was kept up a considerable time, and quite eclipsed the coming nuptials of Sir Henry Travers in the minds of the inhabitants of —— and its neighbourhood. Nor was Judy inactive in extending the news of the costly gifts sent to her mistress and to herself. She visited all her acquaintances—a numerous circle—to whom she related, with undissembled pleasure and unrepressed triumph, the magnificence of the articles contained in the large case that had arrived from London. "I'll say nothing of the money that has come," said she, "except that if my mistress wished to demean herself by setting up a bank, she might do so now, to my certain knowledge. There's no end to the riches of the family Miss Honor has married into: they might walk on gould, if they pleased. The Lord Lieutenant himself has not so great a fortune, and I've been tould they mean to pay the national debt just for the honour of England. They are

as proud as peacocks, as well they may be, to have the honour of receiving into their family a lady of such good blood as Miss Honor, or Mrs. James Hunter, as she is now. What do you think of her sending me ten guineas—besides two gowns, a cloak, and a bonnet fit for any lady in the land?"

Nor did Judy omit going to Miss White's shop, on pretence of buying something.

"Look what splendid dresses I'm having made up for the future Lady Travers!" said the old spinster, spreading out, with an air of triumph, her best silks.

"In truth, they're very well for this part of the world," observed Judy, coolly; "but, if you saw what Mrs. James Hunter has sent over for her mother, you wouldn't think anything of these dresses. Velvets as close and as rich as if they were meant never to wear out, satins and silks that would stand of themselves, and laces finer than cobwebs."

Miss White tossed her head, and Judy marked with inborn satisfaction the symptoms of her anger and envy.

"My goods come from England, too," observed the milliner angrily, "and better can't be had."

"Not, perhaps, in Dublin, where *you* buy them; but in London one has the pick and choice of everything from Paris, ay, and from Hingee, too; and, talking of that, you never saw two such Hingee shawls as her son-in-law has sent to my mistress."

This was too much for the spiteful Miss White's patience; and Judy, who enjoyed her discomfiture, gave the finishing stroke by adding, "If I were to tell you the sum of money sent to my mistress by her good daughter, you'd turn up your hands and eyes and bless yourself."

From this day forth, Mrs. O'Flaherty became a person of no slight importance in the town and neighbourhood of ——, and Judy shared a due portion of the consideration accorded to her mistress. Frequent letters, and almost as frequent gifts, proved that riches had not corrupted the heart of Honor, nor caused her to forget her mother; and pleased were they who, through the medium of Judy, could get a view of the presents, and hear the marvellous descriptions of the wealth and grandeur of the Hunter family.

"Shure aren't the half of 'em half dead with envy and jealousy," observed Judy to

Mr. Patrick O'Donohough. "It does my heart good to see how they wince when I tell 'em things; and, as for that baste, Biddy White, (I'll not put a miss before the name of the crathur,) I'm certain she hasn't made a good meal, nor had a good night's sleep, ever since she heard of the great match Miss Honor has made."

"In your place, Mrs. Judy," said Patrick, "I'd let the subject drop. I'd appear to think it was quite natural that your young lady should have married a rich gentleman, and that it was equally so that she should send costly gifts to her mother."

"Arrah, Mr. Patrick, you don't know how many slights and affronts I've had to put up with from these same envious, spiteful people, nor what a comfort it is to me to vex 'em now, by throwing Miss Honor's good fortune into their teeth. If I wasn't to talk to 'em about it, *they'd* never say a word on the subject, and then I wouldn't have the pleasure of seeing how angry and sore they are."

Mrs. O'Flaherty now returned to her own abode, and found herself the object of general attention and kindness, her neighbours

taking especial care that she should not be left to solitude. The mother of the rich Mrs. James Hunter found herself very differently treated to what the dependent mother of the unportioned Honor O'Flaherty had been; and it was only the gentry in the neighbourhood who had hitherto so liberally and with such delicacy of feeling supplied, nay more, anticipated her wants, who remained unchanged, showing her neither more nor less attention than previously. The chief comfort of the old lady, however, consisted in her confidential communications with Judy, now doubly endeared to her by the affection that faithful but eccentric servant had invariably felt for her young lady, and the pride she took in her elevation and riches.

The long hours of evening and the early mornings would glide pleasantly by when Mrs. O'Flaherty, seated in her easy chair, would listen to the animated, though often-repeated, stories of Judy, always connected with "Mrs. James Hunter," whose old sayings and doings, though formerly the subject of dissatisfaction to and reprehension from her mother, were now dwelt on with tender-

ness. "Didn't I always tell you, ma'am, that she'd make a great match, and haven't my words come to pass? Oh! I'll die happy if I live to see her handsome face looking out of her elegant carriage window, drawn by six beautiful horses, coming up the main street, with mounted servants before and behind the carriage, and she bowing and smiling for all the world like the high sheriff of the county when he comes into the town escorting the judges, or like the favourite member of Parliament for the county when he is chaired."

"But why would you have six horses, Judy? Other people have only four."

"There you've hit it, ma'am; *that's* precisely the reason. Four horses would surprise no one, but six — six, ma'am—oh! that would make all the spiteful crathurs that envy her good fortune, and especially that bitter pill, Biddy White, go mad with jealousy! Six would kill 'em, ma'am; and that would be such a comfort to me."

"Ah! Judy, if her poor father was alive;" and the white handkerchief—the preparation for a flood of tears, and designated by Judy as the signal of distress, or the wet sail, from

bearing her mistress over troubled waters—was drawn forth.

"Perhaps, ma'am, it's better that he's in Heaven, for there he's safe from temptation, and you are left free from bad usage; and who knows, if he was alive, whether he mightn't bother you and Mistress James Hunter, too, by trying to spend her money? for he was a wonderful hand at throwing away cash."

The arrival of the rich presents from Mrs. James Hunter, and the announcement of her marriage copied from the English papers into the Irish ones, kept up the topic in ——, throwing quite into shade the approaching nuptials of Sir Henry Travers, and the preparations making for that event. When Miss White exhibited the dresses to all invited to inspect them, and expected nothing but praises, she was met by cold looks and shakes of the head, followed by "Ah! if you could see the gowns, the laces, the shawls, and elegant lace caps, *real* Mechlin and point lace for the evening, and the finest Valenciennes for the morning, sent to Mrs. O'Flaherty, you would think nothing of these," was the observation that met her ear from every female frequenter of her

shop; so that the exhibition of the *trousseau*, from which the cross milliner anticipated cause for triumph, proved only a source of mortification to her.

The impetus given to the gossip of —— by Mrs. James Hunter's marriage, riches, and splendid gifts was such, that the officers of the —— Regiment began to feel alarmed lest they, too, might be surprised into sudden marriages with some of the *naïve belles*, with whom, however pleasant it might be deemed by them to walk, ride, dance, and flirt, they felt no desire to wed; for, as more than one of these gentlemen observed, "choosing a partner for a ball and a partner for life were two very different things; the qualities which peculiarly fitted a young lady for the first not being always accompanied by those grave ones which were so essential in the second." And each, and all, Mordant alone excepted, determined henceforth to use more circumspection in their flirtations.

Mordant, the prudent Mordant, could not resist the attraction that drew him twice or thrice a week, and would, had he not made a desperate effort, have drawn him every day, to the Countess O'Neill's, believing that

in going *only* thrice a week he evinced such a wonderful degree of self-control that his prudence could not be called into question. How could he leave off going, when Patrick O'Donohough, generally reserved and stately, allowed his mouth to relax into a broad smile of welcome whenever he opened the hall-door to him? When the Countess O'Neill, in a tone of pleasure that proved her sincerity, declared she "was glad to see him"—and when, though last, not least, the beautiful Grace blushed a rosy red when he entered the room? It was true that, in fulfilment of her vow to show him that her heart was not *wholly* his, as she feared he might have imagined, she let her eyelids drop when he appeared, and carefully refrained from extending her hand to welcome his approach, marks of reserve that had not escaped his observation. But drooping eyelids do not always indicate indifference, nor the avoidance of shaking hands coldness; and, even if they did, that rosy blush would have induced him to give them an interpretation more favourable to his wishes; and so he continued his visits, leaving to Grace the proud consciousness that he could not now flatter himself into a belief that he was beloved.

Dear, beautiful, simple, Grace, how little versed was she in the secrets of the heart of man! how little aware that the very means she had, in the artlessness of her nature, adopted to deceive Mordant as to the real state of her feelings, revealed them to him more fully than had she continued, on the renewal of his visits, to treat him as she had done before their suspension; for it betrayed that her pride, and, perhaps, a more tender sentiment, dictated the change. He found many excuses for the frequency of his visits —for when were excuses ever wanting when people wish to follow their inclinations? To bring the Countess O'Neill an English newspaper, to lend her a book, to show her some sketches, always presented occasions for a call; and, although he went determined that its duration should not exceed half an hour, double and treble that time often glided away, and so pleasantly that none of the trio present discovered, or at least referred to the circumstance. He even obtained permission from the Countess O'Neill to come sometimes to drink tea and read aloud to her and Grace, and, after ten days, this *sometimes* extended to almost every evening.

Mordant was an admirable reader; his

voice was clear and harmonious, its inflection peculiarly just, and the Countess, who liked being read to, fancied that she never understood an author so well as when Mordant gave a voice to his sentiments. Grace was ready to acknowledge the same; but she did not however; for, true to her resolve, *she* never uttered a word to him that could be construed into a compliment; but, when some fine passage occurred in the book, to which Mordant gave due emphasis, he would glance at her, and a bright blush would instantly overspread her lovely cheeks. Often did Grace reflect on the disagreeableness of a habit of blushing, and wish it could be subdued; for it might, she feared, give rise to the most false conclusions, while Mordant thought that, among all the charms with which women are endowed to captivate the heart of man, a blush is the most irresistible, and he would not have Grace lose this charm for worlds. Never more did Mordant dare to question his reason on the probable result of the dangerous pleasure in which he was daily indulging, by thus habituating himself to the society of so captivating a creature as Grace O'Neill. He was in a delirium of

happiness, from which he dreaded to awake; and he abandoned himself to its enjoyment as the unhappy do to a delicious dream, in which they believe themselves happy, yet still possess a half consciousness that were they to awake all would fade away, and to tremble lest their dream should be broken.

Mordant, in truth, found no time for painful reflections. He had to take books, newspapers, or sketches to the Countess O'Neill every day; he had to read to her every evening; and his military duties occupied all the time that was not devoted to the Countess and her grand-daughter. He trembled at the thought that, some day or other, an order for his regiment to leave —— might arrive, and destroy his present happiness; but the thought was too painful to be indulged without making him wretched, and so, like many other men under similar circumstances, he banished it from his mind, determined to forget the menacing future in the blissful present. From this dream-like happiness he was awoke by a letter from his mother. Her letters, like those of other persons dear to him, used formerly to afford him pleasure; but, since his passion for

Grace, they had not only ceased to do so, but the mere sight of one of these epistles gave him a presentiment of evil.

CHAPTER XI.

A FEW lines from Herbert Vernon brought Mordant to his room the day after the rejection of his proposal to Miss O'Neill. "Well, my dear friend," said he, "Vernon, you see before you an unhappy, though I can hardly call myself a disappointed, man, as the lovely Grace certainly never gave me any encouragement. I have received a civil but very positive refusal—one that precludes any future reference to the subject. There, read the letter, Mordant; and he handed it to his friend. "Nothing now remains but for *you* to propose. You, I am well convinced, have no refusal to dread."

"Were I even certain of success, Vernon, which is far, very far from being the case, my position prevents my seeking Miss O'Neill's hand."

"Why not accept my offer, Mordant? Why allow a sentiment of false pride to prompt you to refuse from a friend, who loves you as a brother, the means of securing your own happiness and that of one of the most charming girls in the world?"

"Be assured, my dear Vernon, I am deeply sensible of all your generous kindness; but I cannot bring myself to accept it. Many reasons, exclusive of pride, render it impossible."

"Then you don't love this beautiful girl as I thought you did, and as she deserves to be loved?" said Vernon, almost angrily.

"You are wrong, indeed you are, Vernon. But let us talk on this subject no more."

"Promise me one thing, however, Mordant. Renew your visits to the Countess O'Neill, and, if you find her lovely granddaughter betrays a preference for you, which you may discover by various ways, I will still hope you may avail yourself of my offer. You have generously, nobly, my dear Mordant, withdrawn from the competition, and left the field open to your unfortunate friend. I never can forget this as long as I live; and, my own happiness being now wholly

out of the question, the first wish of my heart is to secure yours and hers."

"A compliance with your request, Vernon, will expose me to certain danger, and it would be more prudent for me to decline it. Nevertheless, I will do as you wish. I will renew my visits to the Countess and her grand-daughter, and I hope I have sufficient self-control to resist the temptation of making myself an interest in the heart of this charming girl."

"For my part, I shall get leave of absence, and go to England. Change of scene, and the society of my family, may do me good. Here I could not stay, in the present state of my feelings."

Herbert Vernon applied for leave of absence, and obtained it, and a few days after set out for England; not, however, without taking leave of the Countess O'Neill, who received him alone, her grand-daughter having declined an interview. The following day Mordant paid a visit to the Countess. The face of Patrick O'Donohough brightened up with pleasure as he opened the door to admit him; and, when he announced the name of the visitor, the face of

Grace O'Neill might have revealed to the most indifferent spectator that she took no common interest in him. And yet there was a degree of reserve in her manner, too, which denoted that she was not quite at her ease. She never referred to the lengthened cessation of Mordant's visits; for Grace O'Neill, with all her gentleness and amiability, had a proud spirit, and, whatever might have been the cause of his long absence from her grandmother's house, she thought it befitting her dignity not to appear to notice it, and treated him as if his visits had never been discontinued, except with somewhat more ceremony than when they were frequent. Mordant thought her, if possible, more lovely than ever; and she certainly did look very beautiful, the heightened colour of her delicate cheeks, caused by his unexpected presence, giving additional lustre to her eyes, and animation to her countenance. The Countess O'Neill, with her usual good-nature, remarked that it was a long time since she had seen him; a remark which made Grace bite her lip, and blush afresh, so desirous was she that *he* might not suppose that his absence had been regretted.

"I am sorry we have lost Mr. Vernon," said the Countess, "for he is a very amiable young man, and used often to come and see us."

"He is one of the most excellent young men in the world," replied Mordant, "and the more he is known the better must he be liked."

"You have been friends from your boyhood, I understand," observed the Countess O'Neill.

"Yes, the most intimate and attached friends. I love Vernon as a brother," replied Mordant; "and he, I assure you, reciprocates the sentiment."

Grace O'Neill took no part in the conversation while it referred to Mr. Herbert Vernon. It was evidently distasteful to her, as was revealed, not only by her silence, but by a slight movement of her under lip peculiar to her when not pleased, and which Mordant, with the quickness of perception which is said to appertain to a lover, had on their first acquaintance remarked. When the subject changed, Grace took part in it; but, when Mordant arose to depart, and the Countess O'Neill expressed a hope that he

would not again remain so long without coming so see them, she abstained from joining in it, and resumed the somewhat stately reserve which had marked her manner on his arrival. Nothing of this was lost on Mordant; and he, naturally of a proud and reserved nature, valued the object of his affection still more when he saw these proofs of her feminine delicacy and self-respect. Did women know how they raise themselves in the estimation of all right-thinking men by never descending from the modest dignity which ought ever to be one of the peculiar attributes of the sex, they would never forget what is due to themselves, and keep men continually in mind of it by their manner.

"I thought Captain Mordant looking rather ill," observed the Countess O'Neill; "perhaps the Irish air does not agree with him."

"It did not strike me," replied her granddaughter.

The truth was, that Grace scarcely looked at Captain Mordant, for, conscious that she felt more than a common interest in him, she was fearful of betraying it by meeting his eye.

"How warmly he spoke of his friend Mr. Vernon! Ah! Grace, perhaps if you had not so promptly and decidedly refused that amiable young man, his merits might, in time, have won your regard."

"Never, dearest grandmother. I felt from the first of our acquaintance that I never should like him, and his persistance in his attentions and ultimate proposal, when he must, unless, indeed, he is a very vain man, have seen that I offered him no encouragement, was not calculated to win my esteem."

"You judge him severely, Grace. May you not attribute this persistance for which you censure him to the profound sentiment you had created in his breast?"

"No, grandmamma. I think a man who thus perseveres without encouragement must have a very poor opinion of her he seeks for a wife, or a very high one of himself."

"I hope, Grace, you will not always be so fastidious. This was the second proposal of marriage you have rejected, and, as the first wish of my heart is to see you happily established in life before I die, how is this to be accomplished if you reject all your suitors?"

"Surely you would not, dearest grand-

mother, have wished me to accept Sir Henry Travers? A man so weak in intellect, so every way commonplace and uninteresting, with no recommendation that ever I could discover except his 'rent-roll,' 'the hall,' and 'his late mother's diamonds,' to which he so often refers with such complacency; and, though these may be very attractive to other girls, they never could be to me."

"And, thinking so, I never said a word in his favour, nor offered any obstacle to your prompt rejection of him. But, with Mr. Herbert Vernon it was different, Grace. Nobly born, rich, good-looking, well-educated, and agreeable, I could really find no reason why any young woman with a disengaged heart could refuse so eligible a suitor."

The word *disengaged* seemed to Grace to be uttered with a peculiar emphasis, and it called a deep blush to her cheeks. She, however, rallied her courage, and, assuming an appearance of indifference which she was far from feeling, observed that "she had always imagined that no girl ought to accept a man, however eligible, for whom she entertained no preference."

The Countess O'Neill dropped the subject,

but she felt more convinced than ever that, had her grand-daughter never known Captain Mordant, she might not have been so insensible to the merits of his friend, Mr. Herbert Vernon, and might have formed a marriage that would have quieted her own mind for the happiness of Grace when she should be no more. Without any relatives to whose guardianship, or care, she could confide her beloved grand-daughter, she trembled at the thought of leaving her unprotected, when death should take herself from earth. This thought pressed heavily on the mind of the Countess, and believing that, had Captain Mordant entertained any intention of paying his addresses to Grace, he would not have withdrawn and left the field open to Mr. Herbert Vernon, she experienced great uneasiness lest the preference which she had a secret conviction Mordant had excited in her grand-daughter's breast, might for ever preclude her from accepting any offers, however suitable, from others, and so defeat her own hopes of seeing her established in life.

"And yet I am sure Mordant loves her," thought the Countess. "A thousand little circumstances which I have remarked prove

it. Why, then, has he so long abstained from coming here; and why renew his visits when his friend departed? Perhaps, he believes Grace poor and dependent, and being himself but a younger son, with the small pittance generally the portion of *cadets de famille*, dreads to involve her in poverty, and perhaps, also, fears to incur the anger of his parents by wedding a girl without fortune. But, happily, Grace, though not a rich heiress, is, Heaven be thanked, far removed from the probability of want; and, did Captain Mordant know this fact, it might remove the sole obstacle to his seeking the hand I would so willingly confide to him. Not that I think him in the least a mercenary man, but that I believe him too noble-minded to think of plunging the woman he loves in poverty. Hitherto, I have carefully concealed that Grace will have a comfortable independence, in order to screen her from the addresses of some of her fortune-hunting countrymen; but now I wish I had been less reserved, for Grace is much too fastidious in her taste to be exposed to any danger by their addresses; and, as all such matters are talked of, Captain Mordant might have

heard it without my being compelled to touch on the subject, which would be awkward and embarrassing in the extreme."

While these reflections were passing in the mind of the Countess O'Neill, her granddaughter's thoughts were occupied with the unexpected visit of Mordant. Why had he remained so long absent, and why had he now come? were questions which presented themselves to her. "Perhaps," thought Grace, "he only came to plead the cause of his friend, Mr. Herbert Vernon, by his extravagant eulogium. He may spare himself the trouble, however, for I shall never be talked into a liking for that gentleman. Could it be possible that Mordant stayed away lest his presence might prevent Mr. Vernon's attentions being well received?" A burning blush of wounded pride and modesty dyed her cheeks as the possibility of the truth of this hypothesis occurred to her; for it argued that Mordant must, in that case, have suspected her partiality for him, and wished his friend to gain her hand.

"He shall find that he was mistaken," thought Grace, all the pride of her nature rushing to her aid. "Never shall he have

reason to believe that I have bestowed my heart unsought. I would die sooner than he should think so, and will leave nothing undone to remove such an impression from his mind. Ungenerous and vain man, first to pay me a thousand nameless attentions, which, although no word of positive love was spoken, must have led any one to believe the passion was felt, and, when he had awakened an interest too deep for my peace, he withdraws to give place to the attentions of another, and now comes to repeat his praises. This is a cruel mockery, a trifling with my feelings, unworthy of Mordant; but I will school myself into coldness; I will tear his image from my heart, even though that heart should bleed, should break; and he shall learn to know that I am not one to love one whom I can no longer esteem."

A passionate burst of tears followed this stern resolve, and denoted that it could not be carried out without many a pang to her who formed it. Love is said to create a perfect sympathy between lovers; but, alas! were this the case, how could they suffer from the endless and torturing doubts and fears, from which lovers are seldom exempt?

A stronger proof of this want of sympathy could hardly be given than on this occasion, when, while Mordant felt more in love than ever after the interview with Grace O'Neill, she, offended and angry, accused him of want of affection, and of trifling with her feelings—offences for which she was determined to punish him by carefully concealing how well she had once liked him. And did she no longer like him? Her heart might have whispered "Yes," had she probed it more profoundly; but "the still small voice" of the heart, like that of conscience, sometimes is not heard, when pride and anger quell its sounds.

Could Grace O'Neill have beheld Mordant when he entered his room, and, flinging himself into a chair, sighed deeply, and exclaimed, "Yes, loveliest of your sex! you, and you only, have ever touched my heart!—how different, how all absorbing is the sentiment you have awakened in this breast, to the fancied, but ephemeral, passions inspired in it by other women!"—she would not have blamed Mordant, nor doubted the sincerity of his affection; nor would she have passed a sleepless night on that which followed

their interview, notwithstanding that speeches similar to that which he uttered are often used by men when they apostrophize a new though not perhaps a last flame?

CHAPTER XI.

We left Mordant gazing with a presentiment of evil on a letter received from his mother. Who has *not* experienced something of this presentiment, when, wholly engrossed by one feeling, one passion, he receives letters from those who have claims on his affection and consideration which he cannot throw off, but who, ignorant of, or even inimical to, the new tie the heart has formed, breaks in with old associations on the newer and more valued ones! To peruse letters, under such circumstances, seems like an infidelity to the beloved, all referring to periods or events when this dear one was unknown and had no influence over his destiny! Mordant had experienced this feeling for some time, and often had he wished that his

friends in England were less punctual correspondents. He was half-tempted to leave the letter unread until the morrow; but, on reflection, "It is better to have it over at once," thought Mordant; and he began its perusal.

After some reproaches for the brevity and infrequency of his letters, Lady Fitz-Mordant wrote: "I should have been uneasy about you, my dear Mordant, if I had not seen your friend, Mr. Herbert Vernon, who said he left you in perfect health, and quite reconciled to your exile in Ireland. *He* is looking anything but well, and is in wretched spirits, the consequence, as his mother confided to me, of an unsuccessful passion for some Irish miss who has turned his head and refused his hand. The thing appeared so utterly improbable to me that I could hardly credit it; but poor Lady Mellborough, with tears in her eyes, vouched for the fact, and (would you believe it?) regretted that this Hibernian Venus—for such Herbert Vernon swears she is—had not consented to become his wife! Really the weakness of some parents is *incroyable, n'est ce pas?*

"She must be such a charming person,"

said Lady Mellborough, "poor credulous woman, taking for granted that the exaggerated description of a young man in love may be relied on; while I, who am not so easily imposed on, feel sure this Miss O'Neill, a descendant of some Irish barbaric king, as your poor friend has been persuaded into believing, is nothing more than a wild Irish girl with a pretty face, thick ankles, large feet, and a *brogue*, which last is, above all things on earth, my aversion. Only fancy such a person the future mistress of Mellborough Castle, Vernon Abbey, and the fine mansion in Grosvenor-square!

"Yet all this the wild Irish girl has refused, which proves that she must be sadly in want of common sense. Take care, my dear Mordant, that you do not become infatuated with any of these Hibernian sirens; for I give you timely notice that neither your father nor I are at all disposed to follow the foolish example of Lord and Lady Mellborough, by being ready to receive as a daughter any one of those fair Milesians whom you might choose to present to us. Even an Irish heiress, if there really be such a *rara avis*, would be extremely objectionable; for

Lord Fitz-Mordant and I have a horror of the Irish. Judge, then, of our unconquerable objection to a portionless daughter-in-law from the Emerald Isle, and keep your heart safe."

Every line of this passage jarred the feelings of Mordant, and impaired his affection for his mother. How contemptible and illiberal did her sentiments appear! He was wounded to the heart, that the lovely, the refined, and pure minded Grace, should be exposed to such contumely; but, like all injudicious interference, this only led to an increase of love and respect for her at whom his worldly-minded mother's sarcasms had been levelled. "And I could blind myself to all this," said Mordant, "could go on from day to day, increasing my own mad passion for this charming creature, and endeavouring to excite one in her pure heart for me, careless of the consequences it might entail on both, and selfishly thoughtless of all but my own gratification! How weak, how contemptible do I appear in my own eyes; how unworthy must my conduct appear in hers! All this I might have anticipated, I must have known, had I allowed the dictates

of reason to be heard. But, no; weak and vacillating, I followed only the counsel of my own treacherous heart, at the risk of compromising her peace.

"What course shall I now adopt? Shall I fly from her presence without any explanation, and leave her to contemn—to hate me? And yet, if I adopt another course—if I tell her grandmother that I go because I love Grace too well, and must not solicit the hand I die to possess—may I not offend? Dare I, however guarded the expressions, reveal to a proud, sensitive, and noble-minded woman like the Countess O'Neill, that my family, on whom, alas! I am dependent, would never receive as a daughter her matchless Grace, whom any family might be proud to welcome? This must not be. She might well tell me that I should have thought of all this before I attempted to create an interest in the heart of her granddaughter, and she would be justified; for, although I have breathed no declaration of love, offered up no vows, my whole conduct, ever since I resumed my visits, must have prepared both the Countess and Grace for an avowal of my attachment.

From what a dream of happiness has my mother's cruel letter awoke me! Would it had not come, and that I might have continued still longer to cheat myself with hope. Hope! and of what? Unstable and narrow as the basis may be on which Hope sometimes makes a stand, I could not blind myself to the fact that my position offered not even a point for the delusive siren to alight on. A younger son, with only a scanty pittance, and with parents so deeply embarrassed in their affairs as to have been compelled to have had frequent recourse to my brother's generosity, I have nothing to hope. Heaven forbid I should ever be so lost to brotherly feeling as to calculate on the probability which dear Mordant's delicate health might hold out of my succeeding him. No; never may I lose my dear, kind brother! It is true he is rich, and well do I know how gladly he would help to better my fortune, but he owes his wealth to his wife, and my pride, my delicacy, revolts from becoming a pensioner on her bounty, on which my mother has too often trespassed.

"I know that my mother fully counts on my wedding some rich wife, a portion of

whose fortune she expects will be appropriated to her wants, and that she is wholly indifferent to my happiness, or, rather, is perfectly convinced that wealth must ensure it! Then her illiberal antipathy to the Irish presents another obstacle! All—everything—conspires against my peace! There have been moments of late when I have deliberated on the generous proposal of Herbert Vernon, and felt inclined to accept it. When I refused it, my pride was stronger than my love; but *now* love has mastered pride, and, to possess Grace, to what, short of dishonour, would I not stoop? But, even were I to take advantage of my noble friend's offer, and solicit the hand of Grace, would the Countess O'Neill, with her high and proper notions of what is due to my family and hers, accept my proposal unless sanctioned by my parents? Certainly not. She would instantly refer me to my father and mother, and, unless a letter from them sanctioned my proposal, would at once refuse it, indignant, perhaps, that I had exposed her grand-daughter to being rejected by my family. Yes, this would inevitably be the case, and do I not know what the result of a reference to my family would be? Has

not this heartless letter from my mother warned me?"

After two or three hours passed in painful reflection, through which no light vista for the future pierced, Mordant arose from the sofa on which he had flung himself, determined on going to the Countess O'Neill's. "The hour has long passed," thought he, "at which they were accustomed to see me. They will wonder why I do not come; perhaps, Grace may be uneasy. Yes, I will go, and at least enjoy a few more hours of happiness before I tear myself away from her whom I adore."

Let not my readers accuse Mordant of more weakness than falls to the generality of his sex. Many are those of it who have adopted the same conduct which he pursued on the present occasion; and many are those who will continue to do so, while men, selfishly, weakly, consult the happiness of the moment, in preference to adopting that line of conduct which solid reason would prompt. Men are, like children, prone to seek pleasure, and desirous to leave to futurity the consequences of their supineness and self-indulgence.

When Mordant entered the drawing-room of the Countess O'Neill, who expressed the uneasiness his unusually protracted absence had occasioned her, and saw the bright blush of happiness mount on the cheek of Grace, he asked himself how he could ever summon sufficient resolution to tear himself from beings so dear to him, and to whom he had now so tenderly endeared himself; and he surrendered his whole heart, his whole thoughts, to the present enjoyment of their society—an enjoyment heightened by a sad presentiment that he could not long count on its duration.

The Countess O'Neill had observed, with silent but heartfelt satisfaction, the growing passion of Mordant for her grand-daughter. His not avowing it was explained to her by his want of fortune, a fact to which he had frequently adverted in conversation, and also to her belief of his total ignorance that Grace would possess a dower amply sufficient for all the comforts and many of the luxuries of life. The Countess had formed a little romance in her own mind, which she hoped, ere long, to see put in action, and patiently awaited an occasion for the *denouement*. She

had seen enough of Mordant to be convinced that he was in every way worthy of the affection Grace had, unsolicited, bestowed on him. His domestic turn, his freedom from extravagant tastes—a freedom so rare in the high-born, habituated from infancy to luxury and grandeur—and the variety of his accomplishments so demonstrative of settled habits, of rational and elegant employment, satisfied her that her grand-daughter's happiness would be safe in his keeping, and that her own would be secured by witnessing their union. She felt that, were she to share their home, her presence could be no drawback on their felicity, for she was sure that Mordant entertained for her a warm sentiment of regard and esteem.

She reflected also that, by living with them, the whole of her income could be appropriated to the maintenance of their common establishment, which would greatly add to its comfort, while Grace and herself could be spared the pang of a separation. The desire of dwelling with the youthful pair was one of the strongest proofs that the Countess O'Neill could give of the high estimation she had formed of Mordant, for

hitherto, whenever she had contemplated the marriage of her grand-daughter, although grieved by the anticipation of the parting it would necessitate, she had never for a moment counted on sparing herself this chagrin of a separation by consenting to take up her abode with her who formed all the comfort of her life. Now, however, when she had spent so many pleasant hours in the society of Mordant, when his taste for and his admirable manner of reading had become known to her, she wished nothing so much as to see him the husband of her dear Grace, and to form one of the members of his home.

Never had she felt so much satisfaction in the contemplation of her easy fortune as now, when she viewed it as the means of removing the only obstacle which she thought could exist to the union of Mordant and Grace; and she longed, ardently longed, for an opportunity to let Mordant know the happiness in store for him. Proud and sensitive herself, she could fully comprehend how *he* must feel at the notion of asking the woman he loved to share his poverty, and even trembled lest his pride might prove an obstacle to his accepting the fortune she

could bestow. But then came the thought that she could make him sacrifice this pride, if made to understand that the happiness of her he loved demanded it, and this task she would undertake.

Never did it occur to the Countess O'Neill that any family, however noble, could object to receive her peerless grand-daughter when assured that she possessed a handsome competency; and, if such a thought had presented itself, she would have dismissed it with disdain; for the Countess O'Neill, the honoured widow of a man whose military achievements and high character had won the respect of Europe, had a just estimation of what was due to herself and the grand-daughter of her chivalrous husband, and consequently believed that Grace must be welcomed into any family into which she married. Much less could the Countess suppose that Grace's being Irish could be an objection. She would have smiled contemptuously had any one suggested such a supposition, thinking it too illiberal and narrow-minded to be possible.

Such was the state of her feelings while, day after day, she marked the growing de-

votion of Mordant to Grace, and saw the sparkling eye and blushing cheek which betrayed the delight his presence afforded to her darling. And nearly similar to the Countess's feelings and projects were those which filled the heart and occupied the thoughts of the faithful Patrick O'Donohough. "That Captain Mordant loves her, there can be no more doubt than that sunshine gives warmth," said Patrick to himself. "I can read it in his face as plain as if it was printed in a book, and I can hear it in his voice. But why he doesn't speak out, and ease his heart, I can't guess. I know by his servant that he's not rich; on the contrary, that, as a younger brother, he has but little fortune; but sure *she* will have enough for both, ay, and to live like a real lady and gentleman, as they both are; and haven't I a good round sum, principal and interest put together, to add to her fortune; for what have I been scraping and saving for so many years, but to give it to *her*? I like this same Captain Mordant. He reminds me of my noble master in many ways. I think there's always a certain resemblance between those of noble character—a something one can't

exactly describe, but that one *feels ;* and I've thought this ever since the first time I saw Captain Mordant. His servant, too, has such a profound respect for him. That's a good sign of a gentleman, for people may say what they like—ay, and even though I once read it in a book, ' that no man is a hero to his *valet de chambre*'—they'll never get me to believe it ; for I know by experience that my noble master was just as great a hero in my eyes when I've handed him his dressing-gown and slippers, as when I girded on his sword when he was going into action, as many a time I did ; and I could no more take the least liberty with him than I would with a king. Indeed, for the matter of that, I never felt such a deep sentiment of respect for the Emperor of Austria himself as I used to feel for the Count O'Neill ; for I used to say to myself, one was born to greatness, and therefore has no such great merit of his own ; but the other has made himself great. He had won renown in many a battle-field, and gained honour by his unflinching courage, his firm mind, and his high principles ; and therefore I looked up to him with a kind of awe, that all his condescension and kindness could not shake off.

"I've tried all I can to let it be known to Captain Mordant's servant that Miss O'Neill will have a nice fortune; but, Lord bless us! what's the use? *He* could no more take the liberty of touching on such a subject, or of even mentioning Miss O'Neill's name to his master, than I dared to do to mine. Captain Mordant, like the Count O'Neill, isn't a gentleman, like some others, to let his servant gossip when he is dressing him; and faith he is right, for to take news from most servants' mouths is like taking water out of a soiled glass. How Miss Grace has recovered her spirits ever since Captain Mordant has renewed his visits! The red rose has come back to her cheeks, and the sunbeams to her eyes; and, when I throw open the drawing-room door every day and say 'Captain Mordant,' both the cheeks and the eyes brighten up, and she looks more beautiful than ever. Oh! how she reminds me of her grandmother—ay, and of her dear mother, at such a moment!

"People may talk of the three Graces, and make a fuss about 'em, and fine young girls they looked to be in marble when I saw them in the Royal Gallery at Vienna, only I'd rather have seen them with l cent clothes

on their backs; but, to my fancy, the three Graces that I have seen, one after another, in this family, beat out all the other Graces in the world. How it pleases me to think that every day that passes over my head my little fortune is increasing by the interest, that it may be the better worth Miss O'Neill's acceptance. Sure 'every little makes a mickle.' as the old saying is. All I want now to make me happy is for the marriage to be settled, and never to see Miss Grace look pale or anxious any more, nor her noble grandmother uneasy. I was sure from the beginning that Miss O'Neill wouldn't marry Mr. Vernon, for, though a fine young man, he is not to be compared to Captain Mordant. They are made of different clay, as the old saying has it."

CHAPTER XII.

While the Countess O'Neill and her faithful servant, Patrick O'Donohough, expected that every day would bring a declaration of love from Captain Mordant, and a proposal for the hand of Grace, and while the daily visits of that gentleman continued to be as regular as heretofore, no proposal *was* made. It appeared to Mordant, notwithstanding his consciousness that the course he was pursuing was wrong, that to leave off these visits was as utterly impossible as to tear Grace from his heart; and he silenced his self-reproaches by saying to himself, "Something may yet occur to bring all right;" a vague and indefinite mode of quieting conscience adopted by many when reason can offer no satisfactory arguments to silence her reproaches, and

which he who uses would dread to analyze, being convinced that they would not bear being examined.

Grace, although happy in the presence of Mordant, felt far otherwise when he was away; for, while his assiduities left no room to doubt an affection which every glance revealed, no positive declaration, no reference to the future, conveyed grounds for hope that he looked forward to a union with her; and the dread of a separation from him haunted her. "Perhaps he waits to become better acquainted with my disposition and temper," would she say to herself. "Or, may it not be that my reserve makes him doubt the extent of my regard, and that he postpones proposing until assured that there is no chance of his being rejected? Yes, it must be so." And, buoyed up by this belief, she would again resign herself to the happiness which his presence never failed to confer on her, until the lapse of week after week bringing no declaration of his passion, a declaration becoming every day more necessary to her repose, again disturbed her peace and alarmed her pride. An exquisite sense of feminine delicacy had induced Grace to maintain a reserve of manner

towards Mordant which she thought due to herself, until he should justify her preference for him by an open avowal of his affection; and, as days and weeks glided away without this expected avowal on his part, her reserve increased.

"I really begin to think she loves me not," would Mordant say to himself, "or, if she does like me, it is not to an extent to interfere with her happiness. It is better that it should be so; and yet, after such constant attention—such an entire devotion of my time to her, I might have expected to have made a deeper impression on her heart. I have probably been self-deceived, and, loving her so fondly, have fancied that my affection was reciprocated. Yet what reason have I had to think so? Simply that she blushed whenever I approached, and that beneath the drooping lids of her beautiful eyes I thought I sometimes saw an expression of tenderness that transported me. How futile do such proofs of fancied affection appear when examined! The blushes may be the effect of a constitutional sensitiveness of the nervous system, and nothing more; and the melting softness of her dove-like

eyes may only be their natural character! If she indeed loved me, could she maintain the reserve of manner that has never for a moment subsided since I resumed my visits? No, she loves me not; and so I may, without endangering her happiness, continue those visits which form mine."

And so, justified in his own eyes, Mordant ceased not to seek the society of Grace, and to continue those attentions which a man should never pay to any woman but her whose hand he means to solicit. He heard often from his friend, Herbert Vernon, who inquired, with deep interest, what progress he made with Miss O'Neill. "That you loved her, I felt well assured long before I left Ireland," wrote Vernon, "and that she reciprocated your affection I was equally convinced. Do not trifle with her peace, but claim the hand I would give worlds to possess, for it is a boon monarchs might be proud to own. If, however, you have not courage to brave the anger of your family for marrying her, leave her, if indeed, it be yet time to save her from the pangs of disappointment. Your mother has seen a good deal of mine lately, and, on hearing

from her the cause of my low spirits, wondered how she could have any pity for me, much less feel ready to receive with pleasure the charming Grace, had she consented to become my wife. Lady Fitz-Mordant spoke in such disdainful terms of *mésalliances*, as she designated a marriage with an untitled and portionless young lady to be, and, above all, an Irishwoman, that you must not expect ever to be pardoned, or your wife received, should you win and wed the fair Grace. In your place, I confess I should not hesitate to sacrifice the unreasonable and illiberal opinions of parents who think only of the gratification of their own ambitious views, instead of consulting your happiness, and, if Grace will accept you without their sanction, secure her happiness and your own by marrying her.

"I conclude that Mrs. James Hunter, late Miss Honor O'Flaherty, has kept her friends at —— *au fait* of her success in England. Hunter's father and mother, although, as you may well imagine, by no means pleased with the marriage of their son, were too fond of him not to receive his wife with kindness. They believed that, because unportioned, Mrs. James Hunter

would receive, with all due gratitude, their condescension. They counted without their host, however; for that lady, whether instructed by her husband of the peculiarities and failings of her papa and mamma-in-law, or instigated by her own pride, accepted the amnesty extended to her and her liege lord with so high a sense of her own dignity as to dispel from their minds the notion of her thinking there was anything to pardon. She carries matters with a high hand; has already got the complete mastery, not only over her husband, but over his parents, and rules them with a firm, if not with a despotic hand.

"I begin to think that Mrs. James Hunter is very far removed from the giddiness and folly of which we used to accuse her. She was, I fancy, playing 'A Bold Stroke for a Husband,' and, having accomplished her aim, has now assumed 'the decent dignity' of a matron. Old Hunter has bought a very fine estate in our neighbourhood, which he has given up to the young couple, I verily believe, in order that he may be master of his own house—a privilege, it is said, his daughter-in-law was well disposed to contest. Before, however, that you con-

demn Mrs. James, as the old folks call her, bear in mind that, had *she* not adopted the course of governing the parents of her husband, *they* would inevitably have treated her, as they were prepared to do, with great *hauteur;* for both *père et mere*, like most *parvenus*, entertain a sovereign contempt for all who are not rich, and would have made their *belle fille* remember that she brought no capital to the partnership with their family; and, above all, that she is one of the race they most abhor—Irish.

"No reference is ever made to either of these facts, and Mrs. James extorts a profound respect from the heads of the house of Hunter. I only repeat what I hear on this subject, as I have not yet seen the parties. I must be the best natured fellow in the world to continue liking you as I do, when believing you the most fortunate man on earth in the possession of the heart of the lovely Grace O'Neill. Remember, my dear Mordant, that I have neither forgotten nor repented the offer I so ardently begged you to accept before we parted, and that you cannot give me any proof of your friendship which I should more value than that of taking advantage of it."

"Generous, kind friend," exclaimed Mordant, "laying down Vernon's letter, "you are much more worthy of Grace than I am! If she knew you as I do, she must have loved you, for a nature so wholly unselfish, and a heart so noble, must have won her regard. Could I but be sure that she loves me, I do believe I should adopt Vernon's counsel, brave the anger of my family, and lay my heart and hand at her feet. But, while in doubt of her affection, and convinced that the Countess O'Neill would not listen for a moment to any proposal unsanctioned by my father and mother, it would be madness to propose, and I should find myself exiled from the presence of her most dear to me on earth. Never was man placed in a more false—a more painful position; and never did man feel more utterly helpless to extricate himself from it than I do. If Mordant, that good, kind brother, were in England, I would get leave of absence, and go to him to have his advice. He is warm-hearted, and so happy himself in his wedded life, that he could appreciate and sympathize in my feelings! He, however, is far away, and explanations by letter are very different to those made *vivâ voce*."

"The want of delicacy on my mother's part, with regard to pecuniary affairs, renders me more tenacious of touching on them with my kind and generous brother. I have reason to suspect that she has drawn largely on him and Lady Mordant, to assist her from the consequences of her ruinous and incurable passion for play; and, such is the unbounded generosity of my admirable sister-in-law, that I believe she has often supplied her with money unknown to my brother, lest his feelings might be wounded by her too frequent demands. My father's resources are, I fear, terribly cramped by his devotion to the turf, which has swallowed up countless thousands of his fortune. Thus, whichever way I turn, I find myself without hope of assistance, except from Herbert Vernon; and to accept his noble offer does not seem to me to be consistent with honour,—aware as I am, that I have no prospect of ever being able to repay it. I would prefer the most modest competency with Grace to boundless wealth without her, or to having recourse to the generosity of Herbert Vernon. But I am convinced that the Countess O'Neill never would consent to her

grand-daughter's entering any family without the approbation of the heads of it.

"How unfortunately am I situated! And, knowing this, what folly—what madness it was—to persist in my attentions to Grace! The moth, that hovers around a candle until its flames consume it, is not more senseless than I have proved myself to be. But, if it was madness to risk my own peace, what term of reproach sufficiently strong can be applied to me for endangering the peace of her I love? I feel, alas! too late, how culpable my conduct has been, and would give worlds, were they mine, to redeem it. I must, inevitably, lose the esteem of the Countess and her grand-daughter,—the two women in the world whose esteem is the most dear to me! With less humility, with regard to my own powers of pleasing, I might have avoided the folly of which I have been guilty. Had I reasoned, as a sensible man might, I should have surmised that, however superior Grace O'Neill is to all other girls I have ever seen, her youth and her want of experience might lead her to judge much more favourably of me than I deserve; and that consequently, with all my demerits, my

constant attentions might make an impression on her heart dangerous to her peace. If vanity makes many a man commit errors, a freedom from it, I now find, may lead to results no less painful. Lovely and too dear Grace, why must I wish that we had never met, since our meeting can bring us nothing but chagrin?"

While Mordant, a prey to anxiety and self-reproach, was suffering even more than the object of his affection, although she, poor girl, was in a very painful state of mind, another letter from his mother reached him. Lady Fitz Mordant wrote under the pressure of pecuniary difficulties, and the contents of of her epistle were as follow:—

"Among the few advantages of your exile in Ireland, I am told that the extraordinary cheapness of that country is one. Your friend, Mr. Herbert Vernon, declares that there cannot be found in your country quarters a single source of expense, and that officers grow positively rich there on this account. It has, therefore, struck me, my dear Sydney, that you might be able to lend me a hundred pounds, for which I have immediate occasion, having been peculiarly un-

lucky at whist the last few nights. Your father, *malgré* all my remonstrances and good advice, perseveres in his mad passion for the turf, and, as usual, was a heavy loser at Newmarket during the last meeting. He is the dupe of his trainer and grooms, but will not be convinced of this fact while he has a hundred pounds at his banker's. To appeal to him, therefore, would not only be utterly unavailing, but would draw down on me a long lecture on my card-playing, he thinking, selfish as he is, that, while *he* has a right to stake thousands on the turf, I am blameable for risking a few paltry hundreds at whist, a game at which I excel.

"Were your brother in England, I should have no occasion to trouble you; for, although he and his wife entertain a most absurd prejudice against cards, and never suffer one to be brought into their house, they nevertheless have the sense to comprehend that my play-debts must be discharged, or the honour of the family compromised, and so they come to my aid in emergencies like the present, with a very bad grace, *entre nous deux*, it must be acknowledged, but still they *do* enable me to pay. I count

on your assistance in this temporary embarrassment, so let me hear from you by return of post.

"A propos of your brother, the last letters from him announced their intention of coming to England. He fancies himself so much better that he can now bear our nebulous and uncertain climate, and he and his wife long to get back to their country seat. I do not discourage their intention, and for two reasons. First, it will be much more convenient to me to have them within reach, in case of a run of ill luck at whist; and, secondly, that both are so self-willed and obstinate that my advice has never had much weight with them.

"If a return to a country where east winds prevail five days out of every seven should renew the dangerous malady which has menaced the life of Mordant so long, he must blame only himself; and, should the result prove fatal, you must remember that, as Viscount Mordant, you will be entitled to look for a much richer heiress than you could aspire to as mere Captain Mordant, although, from your brother being childless, you have for a considerable time been looked

upon as heir presumptive. However, a viscountcy in possession, with an earldom in perspective, is a much better thing than being simply second in possession, as you will find when selecting a wife whenever you take the place of your brother. Lady Fitz-Mordant will be sure to marry again, and that, too, as soon as *les convenances* will permit; for I have observed that husbands and wives, the most happy and devoted to their wedded partners, are always the surest to soon marry again. We have, consequently, nothing to expect from her, for she will bestow her fortune with her hand, on a second husband, and her wealth will pass away to another family.

"Had my advice been attended to, and proper marriage settlements made, as I urged, this could not occur; but your brother was so absurdly delicate and disinterested, that he would not consent to secure any portion of his wife's fortune to himself or his family, so that neither you, nor your father, nor I, will benefit by Mordant having married the richest heiress in England. Such is the result of a son acting contrary to the advice of a sensible and *prévoyante* mother."

Mordant threw the letter from him, so shocked and disgusted did he feel at its contents. That a mother could thus coldly calculate on the death of a son, and a son, too, so worthy of affection as his brother, was so unnatural that he shuddered at the bare thought, and experienced a distaste to his mother against which he vainly tried to struggle. "Such," thought he, "is one of the results of the passion for gaming. It destroys all natural affection, hardens the heart, and renders a mother so callous that she can contemplate without sorrow the probability of the death of her *first-born*, though he possesses every quality calculated to inspire tenderness and retain regard."

He took up the letter to consign it to the flames, unwilling to allow a chance of any eye but his own ever perusing it, when he saw a postscript which had previously escaped his notice. "Should," wrote Lady Fitz-Mordant, "it so happen that you have expended the fruit of the extreme cheapness of Ireland in paying any debts contracted in England, and that you have not a hundred pounds to spare, you can write to your friend, Herbert Vernon, who is rich, to ask him to send me

a hundred pounds *on your* account, but to do so as soon as possible. I will enable you to repay it the first time I have a run of luck at cards."

CHAPTER XIII.

And now, the settlements being drawn, the *trousseau* prepared, and the necessary alterations for the reception of a bride completed at "The Hall," the day was named for the solemnization of the nuptials of Sir Henry Travers and Miss Fitzgerald. A splendid *déjeûner*, to be followed by a dinner and ball, was to be given at Ballymacross Castle, and, as usual in Ireland under similar circumstances, no expense was to be spared.

"As we are to give no fortune, my dear," said Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald to his wife, "the least we can do is to be liberal about the breakfast, dinner, and ball."

"I quite agree with you, my dear Sir Geoffrey, but we must remember that you

will have a considerable sum to pay for the *trousseau*."

"True, true; nevertheless, we must not be sparing for the wedding. We must feast the tenantry. Give them plenty of beef, beer, and whisky, and a dance on the green."

"I really, my dear Sir Geoffrey, don't see the necessity, and the expense will be very heavy."

"I know it, but it can't be helped. When did a wedding, or a christening, or a coming-of-age day ever take place at Ballymacross Castle, from time immemorial, without the tenants and followers having their share of the pleasure of their landlord? I couldn't enjoy my daughter's wedding, if my tenants and dependants did not enjoy it, too."

"I'm sure I would make no objection, if we could afford it, Sir Geoffrey."

"But think, my lady, of all the expense we shall be saved by not going to England. *That* saving will ten times cover the sum, ay, and more, too, which will be required for the wedding festivities."

"But we have still a daughter to marry."

"Then she must find a husband at home, for never again will I hawk a daughter to the English market."

"You have such a strange way of expressing yourself, Sir Geoffrey."

"Why, when you and I are *tête-à-tête*, my dear, I don't see any necessity of mincing matters. You must confess we took our girls to London every season for the sole purpose of getting them married; and that I call taking them to market. I wish we had let it alone, and tried to marry them to some of our neighbours, as in the present case."

"But I really believe, my dear Sir Geoffrey, that Sir Henry Travers never would have sought the hand of Florence, had she not mixed so much in the fashionable circles in London, which have given her that ease and elegance of manner, that *je ne sais quoi*, which is so attractive."

"And *my* opinion is, that had she not passed so many seasons in London, he might have proposed for her eight years ago, which would have saved us a considerable sum of money."

"Well, my dear Sir Geoffrey, better late than never. She has now secured a very good match, and so we have every reason to be satisfied, though, I confess, I once had

hopes of seeing her married to some young English nobleman."

"Who would have despised you and me, Lady Fitzgerald, as the English nobility generally do us Irish, forgetting how much more ancient and truly noble our lineage is than their own."

"I really cannot see what the very proudest of the English could discover in you, or me, Sir Geoffrey, to find fault with, or to despise," observed the lady, drawing herself up, and assuming a very stately air.

"Don't let us bother our brains about 'em, my dear, but make our preparations for the *fête*. I am sorry to find that our two large marquees are nearly destroyed by the rats. That stupid fellow, Paddy M'Quay, instead of looking after them, had left them in the loft of the granary, which is infested with rats. I've set some of the old women who weed the gardens at work, to piece them with an old *winning-sheet*, and they may be made to do for the back-ground; but we must send around to borrow others to have placed on the lawn, for fear of rain. Colonel Maitland has offered to send the regimental band, and a guard of soldiers to keep the ground;

and the red-coats will have a good effect among the trees."

"Ay, my dear Sir Geoffrey, and keep off the light-fingered gentry among the mob sure to assemble on such an occasion."

Three days previously to the wedding a box arrived at Ballymacross Castle from London. "Carriage paid" was carefully marked on the lid, and great were the excitement and curiosity to which it gave birth. Being addressed to Lady Fitzgerald, her daughters, though burning with impatience to have it opened, were obliged to wait her pleasure.

"I dare say it contains a wedding present from my dear and kind friend, the Duchess of Bellemont," observed Lady Fitzgerald, with an air of dignity. "I wrote to apprize her of the intended marriage, as, indeed, I have done to the most distinguished of my noble friends in England, and have also had various paragraphs inserted in the fashionable newspapers on the subject."

"Do, dear mamma, have the box opened," said Miss Fitzgerald: "not that I expect any *cadeau* from the Duchess of Bellemont of more value than a *papier mâché* inkstand, *or-molu* paper-knife, or an Indian

hand-screen: for those are the sort of presents her Grace generally sends on such occasions."

"We are to look to the intention, and not to the intrinsic value of the Duchess's gifts," replied Lady Fitzgerald. "It will read so well in the papers, that among the tasteful and costly gifts presented to the fair bride, the Lady Travers, by her numerous noble friends, those of the Duchess of Bellemont attracted universal admiration. This paragraph will establish two facts — first, that we live in the first circle in England; and, secondly, that we are sufficiently intimate with the Duchess of Bellemont, that well-known leader of fashion, to receive presents from her."

"But do, dear mamma, have the box opened," said Miss Kate Fitzgerald, "for I have my doubts about its coming from the Duchess, which is the cause of my impatience."

"All I can say," observed Lady Fitzgerald, "is, that I would prefer the most worthless gift that would enable me to quote it in the fashionable newspapers, as coming from her grace, to a really valuable one

from a less elevated donor. But, ring the bell, that one of the servants may open the box."

The three ladies placed themselves around the table, on which the box was put, while the servant extracted the nails; and, a quantity of blue paper being removed from the interior, some velvet cases, adorned with gold lace, were revealed, each bearing the names of the person for whom the gift was intended.

"Was I not right," said Miss Kate, "when I expressed my doubts of the presents coming from the Duchess of Bellemont? This case is positively directed to me!" and the young lady seized it, and, hastily opening it, exclaimed, "Was there ever anything half so lovely? See, mamma, look Florence, how beautiful!"

The *écrin* contained a *parure* of coral set in gold, and enriched with oriental pearls of rare beauty. Lady Fitzgerald looked somewhat disappointed when she saw that the only case addressed to her was too small a one to leave room for so large a gift as that for Miss Kate; but her countenance brightened when, on opening the little case, a

diamond hoop-ring was revealed, the brilliants so large and pure as to denote their value.

"Well, this *is* the finest diamond ring I ever saw," exclaimed she; "no, this cannot have come from the Duchess."

Miss Fitzgerald now drew forth the *écrin* addressed to her, and found in it a *parure* of pearls with brilliant clasps of great beauty. "This is something like a bridal gift," said she; "I think it exquisite."

"But what can the other case contain?" inquired Lady Fitzgerald, drawing forth one directed to her husband. "Send for your father, my dears," cried she, "he would, I am sure, like to open it himself."

"Heyday! what's all this joy about?" demanded Sir Geoffrey, entering the room; and in reply the three ladies held up the magnificent presents they had received.

"There is also something for you, my dear," said Lady Fitzgerald; and she handed him the case.

"Well! well," exclaimed the Baronet, his honest face expanding into a broad smile, as he drew from the case a large and very costly gold snuff-box, with his cypher and

crests in brilliants, around which was the word "*Reconnoissance*," the letters formed in diamonds of considerable size. "This is, indeed, a most valuable gift."

"But who can the donor be?" inquired the young ladies, both speaking together. "Some one of our noble English friends, without doubt," said Lady Fitzgerald, proudly.

"Not a bit of it, not a bit of it. I'll lay my life these gifts are from an Irish and not from an English friend," exclaimed Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald, triumphantly. "They come, I'll be sworn, from Honor O'Flaherty; for, when was an Irish heart deficient in generosity and gratitude?"

A few lines addressed to the family, expressive of warm gratitude for the past kindness shown by them to her mother and herself, and praying their acceptance of the gifts that accompanied the letter, proved that the Baronet had guessed rightly; and all united in praising the good taste and munificent spirit of Mrs. James Hunter, whose elopement was forgiven, if not forgotten, in the contemplation of the rich results of it that met their eyes. Even Sir

Henry Travers, who had heard and resented the false reports of his having been rejected by Honor O'Flaherty, pardoned the offence, when he beheld the costly gift presented to his bride elect, and declared that the sins of Miss O'Flaherty ought to be forgotten in Mrs. James Hunter. Lady Fitzgerald was the only individual in the family circle who had a wish ungratified, so great was the pleasure the gifts received had afforded; but she shook her head and sighed, as she observed, "What a pity it was that such magnificent presents could not be cited as having come from a Duchess!—they would have produced such an effect in the fashionable London newspapers."

"One thing I insist on, Lady Fitzgerald," said the Baronet, "and that is, that Mrs. O'Flaherty be invited to come here for the wedding, and to take a bed. We must show this mark of attention to our old friend; and, remember, I told you so before I ever dreamt of her daughter making us such fine presents."

"Certainly, Sir Geoffrey, I am *now* quite of your opinion, and I will write to her to say that we will accept no excuse. The

Countess O'Neill has promised for once to break through her habit of seclusion, and to come with Grace; and really, as there are so very few persons of title in the county to be present at the wedding, I am very glad that her name will figure in the paragraph I am preparing for the London papers."

"And so, my lady, you only wish to see one of your oldest friends and the most estimable woman in the world at your house, that her title may figure in the list of the company. '*O tempore! O mores!*'" observed the Baronet, turning up his eyes.

"How can you take such strange notions into your head, Sir Geoffrey?"

"How can I help it, when I hear you give utterance to them?"

"You forget, Sir Geoffrey, that one must think of the effect to be produced in London by the nuptials of our daughter."

"Stuff! nonsense! my lady. Who in London cares a pin about our daughter or her marriage? and your flaming paragraph will only make people laugh. Puffing off obscure individuals, like ourselves, is sure to render us ridiculous."

"You must excuse me, Sir Geoffrey; but

we, who have been in the first society in England, cannot be considered obscure individuals, and the description of our daughter's marriage will command general attention."

"It is this foolish vanity," said Sir Geoffrey, "that makes a pack of silly people like to see their obscure names in print, headed by the announcement of 'A Marriage in High Life;' and then comes some baronet's, or knight's, or squire's wedding, set forth with all 'the pomp and circumstance' with which the alliances of the noble are trumpeted in the papers. Pshaw! It makes me sick to read such stuff!" And away walked Sir Geoffrey, leaving his better half not a little vexed at his want of sympathy in her taste and predilection for copying the manners of the great, as she declared to her daughters.

"But, mamma, papa is not so wrong," observed the bride elect, who took courage to remonstrate, on the strength of her approaching emancipation from maternal control. "It is the servants of the nobility, and not themselves, who supply the subjects for fashionable paragraphs; whereas, in the

sphere to which papa referred, the news comes direct from the parties."

"No matter who sends the news, it is always sure to be read with attention," replied Lady Fitzgerald, "and those who think the contrary don't know the world as well as I do."

"Who would have believed, a short time ago, that Honor O'Flaherty, whom we looked down on as a vulgar, wild Irish girl, Kate, should so soon be in a position to send us such beautiful and costly gifts," observed the bride elect to her sister, when, bearing their presents, they entered their own sitting-room.

"Very true, Florence, very true. If she can *send* such gifts, how fine must her own ornaments be! I could find it in my heart to envy her, notwithstanding that her husband is such a blockhead; for, after all, Florence, provided a man is rich, the world cares very little for the rest."

"The world may care very little," replied Florence, and a deep sigh followed the admission, "but all the money in the world can't compensate to a woman for being tied to a fool. And yet what can a poor girl

without fortune do?" and another deep sigh escaped the breast of the speaker. "Any husband with the means of giving her a decent home is better than being left a dependant on a brother, and worse, on a brother's wife, when her parents are dead."

"You have looked these contingencies in the face, Florence, I suspect?"

"Yes, Kate, and the result is, I have accepted Sir Henry Travers."

CHAPTER XIV.

The auspicious morning of the wedding was ushered in by the loud ringing of the bells of Ballymacross Chapel, and at ten o'clock the *cortège*, assembled to attend the ceremony, were marshalled in the library. The chapel was so near the castle that it was decided that the bride and her company should walk to it; and the procession really had an imposing effect as it proceeded from the portals of the castle across the lawn towards the sacred fane, where the hands of the contracting parties were to be joined. First, appeared the female children of the charity school, founded by Lady Fitzgerald and her daughters, dressed in white, and bearing baskets of flowers. Then came Sir Geoffroy, leading the bride elect, followed by

Sir Henry Travers conducting Lady Fitzgerald, Colonel Maitland giving his arm to the Countess O'Neill; and the rest of the ladies, some twenty or thirty in number, were escorted by the officers and gentlemen of the neighbourhood.

The flag of the ancient and time-honoured family of the Fitzgeralds, bearing their arms and device of "Cromaboo," waved from the highest tower of the castle, and floated triumphantly towards the blue sky. The bride, in all the due paraphernalia of bridal state, enveloped in white satin and lace, with veil and orange-flowers, pearls and diamonds, was said to look extremely lovely—a compliment *de circonstance* accorded to *all* brides on their wedding-day, however destitute of truth it may be. The white-robed bridesmaids, with pink scarfs and bonnets, were much admired; and, truth to say, one of them, Grace O'Neill, never looked more lovely—a fact of which no one felt more convinced than Captain Mordant. Tears, the general accompaniment of weddings, were only shed on this occasion by Mrs. O'Flaherty, who, reminded of her own nuptial day, wept at the reminiscence; and, when her tears on this

point were finished, wept afresh at the thought that her daughter Honor, who had made so brilliant a marriage, had not given her the satisfaction of beholding a public wedding. "Oh! how grand, how elegant it would have been!" sobbed she to Captain Sitwell, on whose arm she leant; "but one can't have everything in this world," —a truth to which the gentleman assented.

The ceremony having been gone through with all due solemnity, the bridal party returned to the castle, Sir Henry Travers conducting his bride, and the procession, preceded by the charity-school girls scattering flowers on their path, emblematic, as it was hoped, of those that were to brighten it through life. The only remark made by the bridegroom was, that "the gardens in the neighbourhood must have been greatly stripped to produce such a vast quantity of flowers;" to which remark no answer being returned by his bride, he did not again break silence until they reached the castle.

The *déjeûner* was worthy the well-known hospitality of the Baronet, and the *savoir vivre* of Lady Fitzgerald, and was rendered ample justice to by the guests. The health

of Lady and Sir Henry Travers being given by Colonel Maitland, Sir Geoffrey arose to return thanks in the following terms:—"Ladies and gentlemen, friends and neighbours, I thank you all from my heart for the cordiality with which you have responded to the toast just drunk. A wedding like this is indeed a source of pure happiness to me and my family. My daughter, born and bred amongst you, goes but a few miles from her paternal home to preside over that of her husband, where, I do ubtnot, the happy pair will often assemble around their board the friends that now surround them. May they long live in happiness to receive their friends and neighbours, and keep up the hospitality of old Ireland. And now I propose a toast which no one will decline; it is 'The health of those who have honoured me by their presence on this happy occasion.'"

Colonel Maitland, having returned thanks for the guests, proposed the healths of Sir Geoffrey and Lady Fitzgerald, which were drank with great enthusiasm; and Sir Henry Travers, thinking it incumbent on him to make a speech, arose, and, after several times clearing his throat and drawing up his shirt-

collar, thus addressed the circle :—"Ladies and gentlemen, on an occasion which unites the ancient house of Fitzgerald with that of one no less ancient, the house of Travers, I may be permitted to say a few words. I had always determined never to form any alliance with any family who could not trace their origin as far back as my own. The Traverses, ladies and gentlemen, yield to none in antiquity of descent. Settled in Ireland for many centuries, their pure blood has never been contaminated by any admixture with that of any family of modern date.

"No, ladies and gentlemen, I should have resisted the united attractions of youth, beauty, and wealth, and have gone down to my grave unwedded, rather than bestow my hand and title on any lady who could not boast as pure a lineage as my own. Let me thank you, ladies and gentleman, for the manner in which you have drunk the healths of Lady Travers and myself. You have wished us happiness, and, if any pair may justly presume to expect it, it surely must be two individuals of such high and ancient families as ours. My feelings overpower me, ladies and gentlemen, when I reflect that this

day has seen united two such respected houses, so I will, with your leave, conclude;" and, bowing to the company, and wiping his eyes, the bridegroom resumed his seat, leaving many of the guests under great embarrassment to keep their risible muscles under control. The bride, keenly alive to the ridicule to which her husband had exposed himself, felt her cheeks glow with shame, and anxiously glanced at her mother to make a signal for the ladies to retire. Before, however, this could be done, Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald arose, and said he had one more toast to propose, and that was the health of a lady who, although not present, was not absent from the kind thoughts of all the family of Ballymacross Castle. He would fill a bumper to the health and happiness of Mrs. James Hunter; and he hoped that every one around him would pledge the toast."

This was the signal for a burst of tears from Mrs. O'Flaherty, who, nevertheless, thanked Sir Geoffrey and the company, assuring them that she was unable to express her feelings, but adding that, "if her poor dear husband had been alive," (and here a fresh stream of tears followed,) "*he* would

have given them as beautiful a speech as Sir Henry Travers had made; for that few gentlemen ever had such a happy knack of making speeches, seeing that during his life he had been kept in frequent practice."

This reference to the speech of Sir Henry Travers was more than the guests could bear. Many of them covered their faces with their handkerchiefs to conceal the laughter they could no longer suppress; and Mrs. O'Flaherty, imagining that she had moved them to tears, declared "that she was sorry to have so deeply affected them:" a declaration which set the table in a roar. The ladies withdrew, and while the bride, attended by her sister, sought her chamber to put on a travelling dress, she whispered in her ear, "O Kate, did you not pity me when that foolish man made his absurd speech? I really felt ready to faint."

"You must get him into better order, Florence, and the first step is to make him hold his tongue."

"How I should have laughed, Kate, if any one else's husband had made such an exhibition of himself! But one's own husband—and on the first day of one's marriage, too.

O! it was torture. I felt every eye was on me; and those Englishmen!—what must they have thought?"

"The absurdity of Mrs. O'Flaherty's speech made them forget the previous one."

The new carriage of the bridegroom, the postilions in new and gaudy liveries, wearing large wedding favours, and similar ornaments attached to the heads of the four horses, as well as to those of the outriders and two grooms, was now driven to the grand entrance of the castle. The bride descended from her chamber in a rich travelling dress, and, after the customary embraces of her family and female friends, was handed to her carriage, followed by her husband; and the chariot drove off amid the reiterated cheers of the assembled multitude on the lawn, and the company who attended the bride and bridegroom to the castle-gate.

"What a capital article all this will make in the London fashionable newspapers!" thought Lady Fitzgerald, as she wiped her eyes with her laced-pocket-handkerchief, and returned into the castle.

And now the guests walked on the lawn, the band played, and the dinner prepared for

the tenantry and followers was served. The ladies and gentlemen mingled with the joyous crowd, and beheld "tables that groaned with the weight of the feast" sending up the smoke of roast and boiled steaming viands, on which those for whom they were designed gloated with pleasurable anticipation. Huge flagons of ale and whisky crowned the tables, to be emptied to the healths of the bride and bridegroom and the house of Fitzgerald, and merriment and glee sparkled in every eye. It was, in truth, a pleasant sight to behold; and, as the kindly-hearted host walked around the well-covered tables, "on hospitable thoughts intent," "and gaily pressed and smiled," he encountered no face that did not beam with affection for him.

"This is a very agreeable scene, Miss Kate—or, I beg your pardon—Miss Fitzgerald, as I should now say," observed Mr. Mac Vigors. "It is so exciting that it must make every bachelor wish that he, too, were married. If I could only meet a lady who would condescend to accept me, I should immediatety lay myself at her feet. Do you think I should have any chance of success, Miss Fitzgerald?"

"If you are so very easily pleased, Mr. Mac Vigors, as to be ready to lay your proposals at the feet of *any* lady who would accept them, I dare say you will have no difficulty in finding a wife," was the reply.

"Ah! you have misunderstood me, Miss Fitzgerald! So far from being *easily* pleased, I am so fastidious that there is only one lady in the world I ever thought of as a wife; and, if she rejects me, I will remain a solitary bachelor all my life. Can you guess who this lady is?"

"I am not at all quick at guessing."

"Rather say you don't want to guess! Oh! Miss Fitzgerald, *you* are that lady; you, and you alone, have ever touched my heart; and, if you will accept it, and bestow on me this fair hand," (and he took her hand,) I shall be the happiest of mankind. Speak, lovely Kate. Bid me not despair! Say you will be mine."

"Really, this is so sudden, so unexpected,—I know not what to say."

"Let me tell you, dear, charming Kate. Say you will bestow on me this precious hand—that I may speak to your father—that I may urge for an early day—that I

may, in short, consider myself the most enviable of my sex?"

"But, why be so impatient? Why not give me time to reflect?"

"Because I tremble to lose you—because I shall be miserable if you do not at once pronounce my fate. Be generous, lovely Kate; don't trifle with my feelings; but just say yes."

"The momentous "Yes" was uttered; the hand that rested on Mr. Mac Vigor's arm was fondly pressed, and the lady, nothing loath, found herself pledged to become the gentleman's wife, thinking much more of the thousands a year she should share by the union, than of him by whom she was to acquire the right of partnership.

"Well," thought Mac Vigors, "I played the lover better than I expected, and yet, hang me if I wasn't ready to laugh more than once while I was enacting the ardent and doubting suitor. But, women will be women. They always expect that a man must be dying for them; and so a poor devil is compelled to play the fool or be condemned to die an old bachelor. If women had more sense a man might speak the truth

to them; but, were I to have simply said—'I want a wife; you appear to be the sort of girl that would suit me; not too young to make a steady mistress of a house—not too old to give me an heir—not good-looking enough to attract admirers, which would make me jealous—not plain enough to make people exclaim, "What bad taste her husband must have!"'—if I said this, though it was precisely what was passing in my mind, I'll be sworn that Kate Fitzgerald would have refused me; so, forsooth, I had to mouth a pack of nonsense about being the most miserable or most happy of men, when the fact is, she could never make me either; and, as to my fate depending on *her*, as I said it did, it was all in my eye and Mrs. Elizabeth, as the phrase is. A good-humoured and affectionate wife may make a reasonable man very comfortable; and, I dare say, Kate will render me so; but, as for the high-flown trash I was obliged to sport, it was all moonshine. For happiness a man depends on good health, a good income, good horses, good hounds, a good cook, good wine, and a good conscience; and, with these, he must be a different fellow from me whom a woman can render miserable."

While these reflections were passing in the mind of Mac Vigors, Kate Fitzgerald thought to herself—"Ah! had I, as I once hoped, captivated some rich and noble Englishman, you would have had little chance, my fox-hunting compatriot, of finding favour in my eyes. *Mais quoi faire?* Any husband is better than *no* husband, and a house of my own is infinitely preferable to becoming a fixture in that of a father or brother. The poor man seems very much in love with me, too, and that is something in his favour; for I agree with the old proverb, 'That we can better govern those that love us than those that we love.'"

CHAPTER XV.

Of all the guests at the wedding at Ballymacross Castle, the two, perhaps, the most worthy of felicity were precisely those who were the most remote from its possession. We refer to the beautiful and amiable Grace O'Neill and her lover, Captain Mordant. Both felt the instability of the happiness their society afforded each other. One *knew*, and the other *suspected*, that it would be of short duration. The sunshine that a lowering cloud in the horizon threatens to overcast, ceases to cheer and exhilarate, and we forget the warmth of the still bright beams in the anticipation of the coming gloom. So it was with Mordant: while enjoying the sunshine of Grace's presence, he was haunted by the certainty that he could

not count on its duration; that a day must come when he should be compelled to leave her, and without the power of saying, "Our separation will be only for a brief time, and I will return to claim my beloved, and to leave her no more." Oh! could he have looked forward to any period, however indefinite, on which he could count on being able to demand her hand, how comparatively happy should he have been!

Grace, too, *felt* that some insurmountable obstacle opposed itself to her felicity. That Mordant loved her she could not doubt; for, guarded as his words had been, there were involuntary looks and tones of his which could only originate in a warm, a true affection, and which conveyed an internal conviction that, whatever might be the motive which prevented his avowing his sentiments and soliciting her hand, it could not be want of love. Wretched when he was absent, his presence now failed to afford her the joy it could once excite in her breast; for, compelled to be continually on her guard lest she should betray her feelings—feelings that could only be justified by a full declaration of his affection—she experienced a constraint

that greatly impaired the pleasure which his society would otherwise have bestowed on her. She never dared to refer to the future when he was present, to that period when he should be no longer near her; and yet it was the perpetual subject of her thoughts.

The gaiety, the bustle occasioned by the festivities at Ballymacross Castle offered a temporary relief to Grace, by withdrawing her thoughts from self, and one dearer, infinitely dearer, than self. The wild and exuberant spirits of the tenants and dependents, aroused into action by generous food and exciting draughts, had something so stirring and contagious in their gaiety, that even the saddest heart must have experienced a momentary relief from the forebodings which oppressed it, when witnessing their joyous revels. But, these over, the gloomy thoughts—for a short time banished—returned with renewed force, and Grace was compelled to assume the semblance of a cheerfulness which was no longer a natural inmate of her heart. To bear this perpetual constraint was to her like being obliged to wear, every day in sadness, a rich and brilliant garb fitted only for some grand occasion,

some high festival, and which she longed to throw off for some simple attire, more in consonance with her feelings.

It was, therefore, with a sense of relief that she left Ballymacross Castle the day after the wedding, to exchange the quiet and privacy of her own home for the noise and gaiety she left behind her. Before, however, the Countess O'Neill and Grace had left the castle, Lady Fitzgerald had announced to them the engagement formed between her daughter and Mr Mac Vigors. The latter had, the previous night, taken Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald aside, and proposed for his daughter.

"She is yours, my dear friend," said the Baronet, "and right glad I am to bestow her hand on you. Where could I get a son-in-law more to my taste? But, remember, my dear fellow, I have no money to give with Kate. If I had, willingly should it be yours; but contested elections, London seasons, and Irish hospitality, which I should be ashamed to abandon, have left me too poor to give portions to my daughters."

"Not a word more on the subject, my dear Sir Geoffrey. I am no fortune-hunter—

have no need to be; and I will make Kate as good a settlement as if she brought me a large portion."

"Just like you, Mac Vigors—always generous and straightforward! I would rather see Kate your wife than that of any man I know, either in England or Ireland."

"What a pity it is, my dear!" observed Lady Fitzgerald to her husband, when he announced to her the proposal of Mac Vigors, that he had not thought of her sooner. One wedding-feast would then have served for both the sisters, and we should have been saved the double expense."

"And lose the double pleasure of the bridal festivities," replied Sir Geoffrey, "which I should be sorry to miss. Didn't I say, my dear, that one marriage in a family often brings another? And you see how truly my words have come to pass. I assure you this has been the happiest day I have passed for many a year, and this good news crowns it. To have two girls, not quite so young as could be wished, and without any remarkable beauty, though I say it who should not, being their father, and without any fortune to make up for the want of

youth and beauty, off my hands, and to two excellent fellows, with comfortable fortunes, living in our own neighbourhood, is a piece of good fortune for which we can never be half enough grateful."

"What an effect this second marriage, following so quickly on the heels of the first, will produce in England; and what a nice paragraph it will make in the fashionable papers! Envious people in London will not be able to say any longer that 'Lady Fitzgerald can't get her daughters married;' and I know people *have* said it. All I regret is, that Mr. Mac Vigors is not a baronet, for the title 'my lady' sounds so well. Do you not think, my dear, that you could get him made a baronet? You have supported the present ministry, and have certainly some claims on them. Why not ask to have Mr. Mac Vigors made a baronet?"

"Because a man of his old family and good fortune would not, I am sure, like to be made a baronet, and for no reason that I can see, except that his wife may be called 'my lady;' and, after all, my dear, she would only share that title in common with every knight's wife, whose husband has been

dubbed a knight for having been a lord-mayor, sheriff, or apothecary in some noble family."

"But, surely, Sir Geoffrey, old baronets are not to be despised. Your title, for instance, is of ancient date."

"Yes, it has been many years in my family, and was conferred as a reward for the gallant conduct of the first of my ancestors who bore it. When bestowed as a recognition of bravery, or of services rendered to one's country, or for talent, it is highly honourable; but, without any of these merits, and merely because a man happens to be rich, it is little worth possessing."

"I wish Sir Henry Travers hadn't made that foolish speech. I saw that many of the guests could with difficulty keep from laughing; and then, to make things worse, Mrs. O'Flaherty must speak! I really felt quite embarrassed."

"To say the truth, I should have preferred the silence of both to their speeches; but, if two persons have but one idea each, what can be expected? The antiquity of his family is the one solitary notion of Travers, and the death of her husband that of Mrs.

O'Flaherty; so both these subjects must ever furnish the topics of their discourses."

"Poor Florence turned red and pale by turns, while her husband spoke. I really felt for her."

"She will get accustomed to his weakness; and the best mode of preventing others from remarking it, is to appear wholly unconscious of it herself."

A round of dinner parties in the neighbourhood, given in honour of the marriage of Sir Henry Travers, rendered it unusually gay for some weeks. The bride, attired in her bridal finery, was the envy, if not the admiration, of the young ladies invited to meet her, with two exceptions—the one Grace O'Neill, and the other Miss Fitzgerald, whose own *trousseau*, being in preparation, occupied her thoughts more than that of her sister. It was generally remarked that Lady Travers looked much less happy than the bride of a baronet with so many thousands a year might be expected to look; and the young ladies who so greatly admired her dress, found it strange that any woman attired in one so costly, and wearing such beautiful trinkets, could appear gloomy and unconscious of her own splendour.

The truth was, that poor Lady Travers—for poor she was in happiness—had already discovered that rich dresses, jewels, a fine seat, and a good fortune, cannot confer happiness when an uncongenial companion who cannot be shaken off is attached to them; and this discovery had affected her spirits. Her sister, in all the pride of conquest, exhibited her lover with a certain complacency to her young female friends, many of whom she strongly suspected would have been right glad to change places with her. It was amusing to see Mr. Mac Vigors, with a face half comic and half ashamed, submit to the airs and graces assumed by his future bride; who one minute tapped him on the arm with her fan, the next sent him for her smelling-bottle or *vinaigrette*, then begged to have a window opened or a door shut, and who believed he must be the happiest of the happy in obeying her commands.

A glance at the young unmarried ladies, similar to that often given by a dogbreaker to those present when he is showing off the feats of some dog previously thought to be intractable, seemed to say, "See into what good order I have already got him;" and the

young ladies bridled and blushed, and wished "that Heaven had made them such a man," or, in truth, any man, by a union with whom they too might become owners of a fine *trousseau*, and have so obedient a slave to perform their errands. "They are all alike, all alike," thought Mac Vigors. "Vain, foolish, fond of power, and anxious to exhibit it. Kate is now showing me off to her female friends like a tame lap-dog, and doubtless supposes that I must be delighted. If men were only half such fools as women believe them to be, what slaves they would become to their tyrants!" And, inwardly smiling, he bit his lip and submitted to be tapped by his intended wife's fan, and to be pouted at, and smiled at alternately, according to the caprice of the lady.

In the midst of these festivities, an order arrived from the commander of the forces in Dublin for the — Regiment to march from their present quarters to Cork. This blow fell as heavily on Mordant as if he had never anticipated the probability of its occurring; and, stunned by its force, he felt unequal to meet it with the firmness and composure so necessary under his circumstances. He dared

not go in person to communicate it to the Countess O'Neill, conscious that any indication of regret on her part or on that of her grand-daughter, into which the sudden news might betray them, might lead him into a disclosure of his own. He therefore wrote a few lines to the Countess, stating the approaching departure of his regiment, and his intention of presenting himself that evening to bid them farewell. Various were the hopes and fears of Grace when this intelligence was communicated to her; but the fears, alas! greatly preponderated over the hopes. Now would it be proved whether he entertained any thoughts of seeking her hand at present, or hereafter, or whether they were about to part for ever. The Countess O'Neill, too, experienced little less anxiety than her grand-daughter. She felt that the time was come for putting an end to the doubts and fears that had lately been chasing away the hopes formerly indulged of a union between Mordant and grace, as week after week elapsed without his avowing the passion she believed he really entertained for her grandchild.

Nor was the Countess free from self-

reproach when she reflected on her own culpable oversight in permitting the daily visits of a young man so calculated to make a deep impression on the heart of Grace. She trembled at the thought that this impression had been made—that on a heart like Grace's it would be ineffaceable, and that the happiness of this admirable creature might fall the sacrifice to her own want of due precaution in exposing her to the attractions of such a man. But no—it was not—could not be possible that Mordant should depart without avowing his affection, and revealing what obstacle had hitherto prevented his soliciting the hand which she longed to bestow on him! No, this could not be. He was too honourable, too noble-minded to be guilty of such disingenuous conduct. Never, never could she forgive herself if the peace of her darling grandchild was disturbed by one from whose dangerous attentions she might so easily have guarded her, had she fulfilled her duty. As these painful reflections passed through the troubled mind of the Countess O'Neill, she cast many a glance at Grace, who, seated at a

table, was listlessly tracing heads on her drawing-paper. Her face was unusually pale, but composed. As the Countess watched her, she noticed that her hand trembled.

"I am very sorry that we shall lose so agreeable a companion," observed the Countess.

Grace grew more pale, and her lip quivered, but she did not attempt to speak.

"Ah," thought her grandmother, "it is as I feared. She loves him, but her maidenly pride supports her. When he shall have gone, how shall I bear to look at that pale sweet face without the bitterest pangs of self-reproach for having blindly, madly exposed her to this fatal affection!"

As the hours of this interminable day, as Grace considered it, rolled slowly on, she implored the aid of Heaven to give her strength to bear the farewell of Mordant without betraying her feelings. "Support me until he has gone," prayed Grace. "Let no tear, no change of countenance, no faltering of my voice, betray the secret anguish of my tortured heart. I should die with shame if *he* could even guess what I feel for him, when

he has never justified my mad passion, even in my own eyes, by telling me he loves me!"

And Grace's prayers were heard! Strength *was* given her to support the hour of trial, though her heart almost died within her; and it was only the deathlike pallor of her face that could have betrayed the deep emotion she so courageously struggled to conceal. No trace of tears stained her cheek; the compression of her lips precluded the tremulous motion which would otherwise have been visible; but there was something, as her grandmother observed, more touching in this unnatural and enforced outward calmness than in the most violent outbreak of grief.

When Mordant entered the room, he was greatly agitated, and the Countess O'Neill was no less so. His eyes turned from her to Grace, and she met his gaze, cold and unmoved as a marble statue.

"This," said Mordant, "is the first time, dear madam, that I have entered your presence with chagrin. Partings are always sad, but when——" and here his voice became tremulous with emotion; "when we leave those dear—oh, how dear!" but here his

utterance became impeded, and some minutes passed before he could recover his self-controul."

"But may we not hope to see you come back?" inquired the Countess O'Neill. "You are not leaving Ireland, and the friends you have acquired here cannot easily relinquish the hope of seeing you again."

"I am afraid I must not look forward to such happiness," replied Mordant.

"Do you intend going to England, soon?" inquired the Countess.

"I know not what I intend, I am so miserable and unsettled. But, pardon me, I have no right to intrude my grief on you. It would not avail me; only let me hope that you and Miss O'Neill will sometimes think with kindness of one who will never, never forget that the happiest hours of his life have been passed in your society."

Mordant rose to depart. He took the hand of the Countess O'Neill and pressed it to his lips. "If I might hope to hear from you sometimes, dear and venerated friend," said he, "I should feel less wretched; but I have no right to this favour, and I will not further urge it." He then approached Grace,

and, taking her hand in his, almost started at its icy coldness. He gazed on her for a moment with passionate fondness, his eyes filled with tears; but she met his gaze unmoved—*her* hand trembled not, though his shook with emotion, and when, having pressed it to his lips, he resigned it, Grace felt his warm tears on it. "Farewell!" said he, in accents nearly inarticulate: "may angels ever guard and bless you!"

"Fare you well!" replied Grace; and Mordant rushed from her presence. But the effort to appear calm, to utter the word farewell, was too much for her strength, and, ere the hall-door closed after him, she dropped fainting on the sofa.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Countess O'Neill seized a *flaçon* of *eau d'Hongrie*, bathed the temples of Grace, and applied other restoratives to bring back suspended animation; but it was long ere these attempts were crowned with success, and, before Grace was restored to consciousness, Patrick O'Donohough entered with the *eau sucrée*, which he always served for the ladies ere they withdrew for the night. Patrick instantly guessed the cause of what he saw, and was on the point of summoning the *femme de chambre* to the Countess's aid, when she laid her hand on his arm, and said, "Forbear! Not a word of this sudden illness must be uttered to mortal."

"I understand," replied Patrick, the tears running down his care-worn face. He, how-

ever, succeeded in getting a little of the cold water into the mouth of his young lady, which, after some time, revived her. Before she had opened her eyes, the Countess made a sign to him, and whispered, "Go, Patrick, *she* must never know that any one but me has seen her thus. Go quickly!" And, noiselessly as a ghost, Patrick glided rapidly from the room before the languid eyes of Grace were opened, and fixed with an expression of unutterable woe on her grandmother. "What has been the matter with me, dearest grandmother?" inquired she, "I remember nothing;" and she raised her hand to her brow, as if to bring back her wandering thoughts. Then, recollecting what had occurred, she shuddered and closed her eyes again, and the big tears chased each other down her pale face. The Countess poured a little *sal volatile* into a glass of water and held it to Grace's lips, saying, "Drink a little, darling, it will do you good." Grace swallowed a few drops, and, feeling relieved, kissed her grandmother's hand, and whispered, "Bear with your poor child, dearest grandmother; all will soon be well with her."

"Shall I ring for my maid to assist you to your chamber, darling?"

"No, not on any account. I would not for worlds have it known that I have been taken ill to-night."

"But you are too weak, darling, to reach your room without help."

"No, grandmother, I am stronger than you imagine. God gives us strength when we pray to Him for it, even though we be ready to drop."

So well did Grace conceal her recent illness, that the sleepy attendant observed no symptom of it when undressing her, and left her for the night without the slightest suspicion that her young lady was indisposed. When, however, the woman had retired to her own room, the Countess O'Neill stole to her darling's chamber, and, seating herself by the side of her bed, could not be persuaded to leave it until, exhausted by her late and deep emotion, Grace dropped into a disturbed slumber. "My dear, my blessed child," thought the Countess, "so young, so pure, so good, why has Heaven permitted that you should be thus sorely tried? And I, oh! why did I not better watch over my precious

treasure? Never more can I forgive myself for having allowed her peace to be invaded; for I only am to blame. And yet he loves her, I am sure he does. Every look, every word, proved it. His agitation, his grief, were too real not to convince me of the truth and depth of his passion for her! And she, dear noble creature, how well did she bear up until he had gone! What an effort must it have cost her to conceal from him what she was suffering! Had I seen him alone I might have let him understand that one obstacle at least to their union, the fear of poverty, did not exist. Yet, how do this without betraying that Grace loved him? And to let him know it, without any declaration of attachment on his part, would be to compromise her delicacy."

Deep sighs from the sleeping girl revealed that, although she slumbered, she had not found oblivion of her late trial. "Gone, gone, and for ever," broke from her lips in accents so fraught with sorrow as to bring tears to the eyes of her grandmother. "My precious child, the hope, the consolation of my old age," murmured the anxious watcher, "how do these words pierce my heart!

That fair brow is already curved by painful thoughts; that youthful breast heaves with sighs. And from all this anguish I might have saved my darling, had I only used the precaution of not permitting the dangerous intimacy I so foolishly sanctioned with one so calculated to win her heart. Yes, the fault was all mine; a fault unpardonable at my age, and the consequences of which may embitter the life, dearer, oh! how far dearer to me than my own!"

The Countess O'Neill sought not her pillow until the light of the morning pierced the opening of the shutters, when she retired with stealthy steps to her chamber, leaving her grand-daughter in a more quiet slumber than during the early part of the night.

When Patrick O'Donohough descended to his own room, he gave way to a passionate burst of tears. "And is it come to this," said he, "that I should have lived to see that creature, who has more of the angel than the woman in her, laid there pale, insensible, and all but dead, looking for all the world like a marble figure on a tomb, and the Countess bending over her with the big tears rolling down her faded cheeks? It is clear that

Captain Mordant has taken leave without proposing for her. Yes, I see it all; and she, who has all her noble grandfather's pride and courage, with the delicacy of the Countess, kept up bravely, I'll be bound, until he was gone, and then fainted. And is she to be left to break her heart, to pine away from day to day, until she becomes a shadow, and drops into an early grave, dug by pride and maidenly shame, for having loved one who could go from her without saying that he adored her—that, were he a king, he would share his crown with her? No, this must not, shall not be. Though I am but a servant, I have the heart of an honest, a proud man in this breast, and the grand-daughter of my noble master shall not be ill-treated while I have a tongue to speak her wrongs, and a hand to avenge them. I'll go this minute to Captain Mordant; and, although it may be said I take a liberty beyond what a servant ought to take, this is no time for standing on ceremony when my young lady's happiness, perhaps her life, is at stake."

Patrick put on his hat with an air of determination which indicated that his mind was made up to some stern resolve, and, gently

opening and closing the door after him, he put the key in his pocket and hurried off to the barracks. He had great difficulty in inducing the sentinel to allow him to enter them; but, having at last succeeded, he hastened to Captain Mordant's room, and demanded admittance. He found him he sought, pale, agitated, with dishevelled hair, and eyes that betrayed the traces of tears; and these marks of sorrow instantly softened the angry feelings of Patrick O'Donohough.

"Good Heavens, what is the matter? Why are you here, Patrick?" demanded Mordant.

"Are we alone, Captain?" inquired Patrick; "are you sure no one can overhear us?" And he glanced around the room, and towards the door of the adjoining one.

"We *are* alone—no one can hear us," replied Captain Mordant; "but speak quickly, tell me why you are here? Have you a letter for me?"

"No, I have no letter, and no one on earth knows that I am here except the sentinel who let me in. Captain Mordant, as you are a man and a gentleman, don't refuse to answer my questions; for, although I am but

a servant, my heart couldn't beat quicker nor louder, this minute, if I had as noble blood in my veins as you have in yours; and sure, after all, isn't it noble thoughts, noble feelings, and noble deeds that make a man?" Patrick looked full in Captain Mordant's face as he made this appeal; and Mordant nodded assent to it. "Do you love Miss O'Neill, sir? Answer me on your honour, on your soul."

A sense of offended pride brought the blood to Mordant's cheek for an instant, and his eyes flashed with anger; but the next moment he recovered his temper, and replied, "Yes, I *do* love her—fondly, passionately, love her."

"Have you ever told her so? Have you this night, before you left her, avowed your affection?"

"No, I have not *said* so; but my grief, my agitation, must have well betrayed that I did."

"But, why did you not tell her so? why not solicit her hand—a hand that a king might be proud to call his own?"

"Because insurmountable obstacles prevent my seeking it."

"Among these obstacles is the want of fortune one? Captain Mordant, forgive me for this liberty. It is no idle, no impertinent curiosity that forces me to ask. On my life, on my soul, it is not."

"Well, I will be frank with you, Patrick; want of fortune *is* one of the obstacles."

"You are not an avaricious man, are you, sir?"

"No, Patrick, certainly I am not; and, if I ever desired to be rich, it was since I have known Miss O'Neill, that I might share my riches with her."

"I thought so—I thought so," exclaimed Patrick, his eyes brightening up with pleasure; "I see I did not misjudge you. Now I begin to see hope glimmering through the darkness, for all the world like the dawn of a bright day after a night of sorrow. You think Miss O'Neill is poor, don't you?"

"Yes."

"But, if I prove to you she is *not* poor,—if I convince you that she has a comfortable, ay, more, even a handsome fortune, quite enough to make any two reasonable persons, who love each other, happy,—would you not then be ready to own your love, solicit her

hand, and make her a happy wife? You shake your head; Captain Mordant, you don't answer me! Are you too proud to ask the hand of the woman you love, because she, and not you, has a fortune? If you had a million and she not a farthing, wouldn't you marry her? If you would not, you're not the man I took you for; and it must be a weak, poor love, that doesn't conquer a foolish pride."

"Patrick, don't mistake my feelings; there is no foolish pride in them."

"Ah! I see how it is, you think that the fortune Miss Grace will have, though enough according to the notions of one like me, would not be enough to maintain you both in the style that persons of rank and high families may be expected to live. But you are wrong. Her fortune is very considerable —more, much more, than you think. Her grandmother and I kept it a secret, for fear that some fortune-hunter might want to marry her. That's the reason you never heard any one talk of her fortune. But the money is safe, and ready to be forthcoming on the shortest notice."

Patrick was near adding that his own savings

—no inconsiderable sum—would be added to the portion of his young lady; but, with a tact not often to be met with in a person of his class, he checked himself, lest Captain Mordant might feel offended at his presumption in supposing that *he*, the descendant of nobles, would accept money from a servant. Patrick gazed with no less surprise than alarm at Captain Mordant, when he discovered by his countenance that the intelligence of Miss O'Neill's fortune, so wholly unexpected as it had been, had not cleared the gloom from his brow.

"You say nothing, sir," observed he; "can it be that your hand is engaged to another?—that you are not free to wed Miss Grace?"

"No, Patrick; I never sought the hand of another lady—never wished to marry until I knew Miss O'Neill, and would risk life to call her mine; but I am placed in a difficult position, from which I know not how to extricate myself."

"You ought to have thought of all this, sir, before you came day after day, and evening after evening, to the house, making yourself, as it were, one of the family, until you got the Countess to look on you almost as a

son, and—and Miss Grace to—to———but, sir, I won't demean her so far as to say what *she* looked on you as."

And here Patrick burst into tears, and sobbed like a child.

"My good, my excellent Patrick, you are right, perfectly right; and my own conscience echoes every reproach you can make me. I did leave off going to the house, for I felt my danger. Would to God I had not renewed my visits!"

"That's easily said, and is what every man says, sir, when he has committed a crime which any one must have foreseen could not fail to occur. Yes, sir, a crime. You couldn't but see, from the beginning, that Miss Grace liked you—that is to say, *might* like you," said Patrick, correcting himself, owing to his wish of not compromising the delicacy of his young lady. "And, seeing this, you continued your visits, and now the order comes for the regiment to go away, and you coolly take your leave, after having won a heart fit for a king, and merely say you wish you hadn't resumed your visits! And is this like a man, or like a gentleman, Captain Mordant? *I*, a poor ignorant man,

and but a servant, tell you it is *not;* and, if the Count O'Neill, my noble master, were alive, or Colonel O'Neill, the father of Miss Grace, this could not have happened. Neither of these gallant soldiers and high-principled gentlemen would have allowed you the opportunity of misusing the innocent young heart you have stolen. Yes, sir, *stolen* is the word, however it may offend your ears; for what else can it be called when a man comes with love in his eyes, love in his smiles, and love in the sighs bursting from his heart, and does all he can to get himself loved — and then, when he has *stolen* the heart which he ought openly and honourably to have asked for, finds out that he is placed in a difficult—a cruel position as you call it? But in what sort of a position is the Countess O'Neill placed before her friends and neighbours for having *allowed* you to come, morning and evening, to steal, like a thief, the affections of her darling? And in what a position is Miss Grace, to see you take leave after all this?"

"Fortunately Patrick, she loves me not; if she did, she could not see my agony when I said 'Farewell!' unmoved. Not a tear

started to *her* eye, when mine could not be controlled. Cold and statue-like, her hand never returned the pressure of mine, she never——"

"Hold! Captain Mordant, don't say another word. You don't, you *can't*, understand the pride, the delicacy of the heart of a young lady, and, above all, an *Irish* lady, the grand-daughter and daughter of two soldiers, with the blood of Irish kings flowing in her veins. No, she would rather die than let her feelings be exposed to the man who had stolen her heart, and who could leave her without openly and honourably avowing his love. But, had you seen her as I did, when you had left the house, how she dropped fainting on the sofa, as if the life had left her; if you had seen her noble grand-mother bending over her with the tears streaming down her pale face, you could not doubt the cruel wrong you have put on two of the noblest women on earth, with no protector but their poor, ignorant servant, Patrick O'Donohough."

Patrick's tall figure seemed to become taller as he uttered his sentiments. His chest expanded as if their grandeur inflated

it, and his eyes flashed as they turned full of haughty reproach on Mordant.

"Oh! Patrick, am I, indeed, beloved by Miss O'Neill? Did she, indeed, betray such deep emotion when I had gone?"

"Ask me no more questions, Captain Mordant. I wish you had not provoked me, by your doubts of the mischief you have done, into letting out the truth. Yes, Miss Grace will have cause for many a long day to regret that she ever knew you; for she is not one to forget that she gave her heart to one unworthy of the treasure."

"Listen to me, Patrick, patiently, while I tell you how I am situated. God is my witness that never did a man love a woman more fondly, more devotedly, than I do Miss O'Neill. Never did man more ardently desire to wed than I do to marry her. Did no obstacle exist but my poverty, I would conquer my pride, and owe my fortune as well as my happiness to her. But unfortunately, Patrick, my parents never would consent to receive her I adore, as a daughter. They are unjustly prejudiced against the Irish. Oh, how do I deplore it; and, though hitherto a most dutiful son, I would, such is

my love for Miss O'Neill, demand her hand in defiance of their anger and resentment, could I hope, Patrick, that the Countess O'Neill would accord it to me without their sanction. How could I presume to ask her consent, knowing, as I do, that the first thing she would say would be to ask if I had obtained that of my family? And could I, Patrick, expose her to the insult of a refusal from my parents to receive her grand-daughter?"

Patrick felt his blood boil when told of the dislike entertained by Captain Mordant's family to the Irish; but the affront offered to his nation, strongly as he felt it, was lost in his anger and indignation at the notion that any family on earth could refuse to welcome his young lady with pride and pleasure into its bosom. He was about to express his sentiments on this point in no measured terms, when, witnessing the pain and regret experienced by Captain Mordant, he checked his feelings and said, "Yes, sir, I now see it all, and I pity you, Yes, from my heart, I do."

"Then, Patrick, will you sometimes write me a few lines to say how the ladies are. I cannot bear to be left in ignorance about them?"

"On one condition I will, sir. Write to the Countess without delay when you get to your new quarters. Tell her the truth, the whole truth, as you have told me. She is of a noble nature, and, when she knows that you are unhappy, will, perhaps, write to you from time to time; if not, I will. And now, sir, good-bye."

Mordant extended his hand to clasp that of Patrick, but Patrick had disappeared without noticing the movement that marked the intention.

CHAPTER XVII.

We left Mr. and Mrs. James Hunter newly arrived at the Clarendon Hotel, awaiting, with little anticipation of pleasure, the coming of Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, senior. Honor was an altered woman. She had learned to reflect since she had left her native land, and reflection generally leads to improvement. Her eyes were now perfectly opened to the errors of her past conduct, and her pride was wounded by the consciousness of its unworthiness. But she was not only aware of past faults, but willing to atone for them, had not the often-reiterated advice of her weak-minded husband, "not to allow herself to be held cheap by his parents," operated to check her new-born desire to behave well, and to treat them with the deference due from a

son's wife to his father and mother, more especially under her peculiar circumstances. Half the money forwarded by his mother to Mr. James Hunter had been appropriated to the purchase of some suitable dresses for the bride, but the other half she insisted on being expended in gifts for her mother. "Wait till the old folk come," said her husband, "and I doubt not they will come down so handsomely that you will be enabled to send better presents, and money likewise."

Honor's heart yearned towards her mother, and she longed to prove that, though absent, she was not forgotten. In truth Honor's feelings toward her parent had greatly changed since she left her; for comparing the doting, the boundless affection and devotion of her mother for her with the unblushing selfishness of her husband, she had learned to appreciate her tenderness, and be grateful for it. When the following day, attired in a tasteful and fashionable dress, Honor descended from her chamber to join her husband in the sitting-room, he was struck with surprise and satisfaction at her appearance. "By Jove, Honor," said he, "there's not a duchess in the land has a more stately car-

riage, or a more dignified air, than you have, at this moment. Only keep it up, and the governor and the old girl will think themselves obliged to treat you as a great lady. I'm quite sure they have made up their minds to see a wild Irish girl, dressed in the fashion of ten years ago, with an awful brogue, one whom they can treat without ceremony. But, they'll find themselves mistaken, and, if you know how to play your cards, you'll soon get the whip-hand of them."

"We must, for our son's sake, behave civilly to his wife," observed Mr. Hunter, senior, to his wife. "I dare say we shall find her with little to recommend her, except her beauty, for James always had a good taste in that; but, as the knot is tied, we must make the best of it, my dear."

"I know that as well as you do, Mr. Hunter; but to have an Irishwoman for a daughter-in-law is a bitter pill to swallow, and it will be no easy task for me to conceal my dislike to her country, I can tell you. I never have forgotten that Irish kitchen-maid who made such a row in our house, and ever since that I can't abide the Irish."

"But you must not forget that Irish

kitchen-maids are as different from Irish ladies as English ones are."

"That remains to be proved, Mr. Hunter; but, somehow or other, I've a notion that all the Irish are alike."

"Don't allow yourself to be prejudiced against our son's wife before you see her, my dear."

"I dare say she's a bold-looking girl, with high cheekbones, light-blue eyes, a great quantity of fair hair, a turn-up nose, and a large mouth, just like the Irish kitchen-maid I was telling you of."

"And *I* dare say we shall find her a very handsome person."

"Well, we'll soon see who is right. I only wish she was back in her own barbarous country, where, I have heard, people make no more ceremony of killing their fellow-creatures than of slaughtering sheep and pigs."

The bride and bridegroom presented themselves in Grosvenor-square soon after it was announced to them that Mr. and Mrs. Hunter had arrived there. Mr. James Hunter entered the drawing-room with Honor leaning on his arm, and, walking up to his mo-

ther with an air as perfectly free from embarrassment as if he was about to present her a bride selected by herself, said, "Mother, here is my wife:" and then, kissing Madame Mère, he made her a sign to perform the same ceremony to Honor, who, cold and stately, stood aloof making no advance. So wholly different was her daughter-in-law from the person she had made up her mind to see, that Mrs. Hunter gazed at her with a mingled sentiment of admiration and awe; until Mr. Hunter, seeing the awkward position of his son's wife, kindly came forward, and, having embraced her, his wife, recovering from her embarrassment, followed his example. Honor coldly presented her cheek, maintaining an air of proud dignity while she did so, that had a most imposing effect on her mother-in-law.

"Well, governor, here we are!" said Mr. James Hunter, slapping his father on the shoulder, "I thought I'd surprise you! And you, mother, how do you like my wife?"

"Indeed, James, I think she is—that is to say, I ——" And the old lady, not knowing precisely what to say, so greatly did the air of dignity of Honor awe her, stopped short.

"Pray, madam, don't give yourself the trouble of answering the foolish questions of James," said Honor.

Old Mr. Hunter, a warm admirer of beauty, was very much struck by that of Honor, though he failed not to observe that there was a certain *fierté* in her air and manner, which he was by no means prepared to expect. In short, the elderly pair, who had intended as a condescension on their part to pardon and treat with something as like kindness as would be consistent with the sense of their own offended dignity her who had entered their family without their knowledge or permission, found themselves awed and imposed on by her presence. Their son, who saw the effect produced on them by his wife, was perfectly delighted, and could have applauded her as he would have done a first-rate actress, so well did he think she had enacted her *rôle*, had he not been restrained by prudence.

"I hope you will immediately remove from the hotel to this house," said Mr. Hunter, kindly addressing his daughter-in-law, "and that you will make yourself perfectly at home."

Honor gracefully bowed her head, and her mother-in-law, thinking it now time to say something, observed that "she hoped Mrs. James would not be shy in asking for everything she required."

Another stately bow, was the only notice taken of her civility.

"You have, of course, ordered the crimson bed-room and dressing-room to be ready to receive my son and his wife, my dear?" inquired Mr. Hunter. "Had you not better show Mrs. James to her room, to see if she wishes any change made in its arrangements?"

"I had ordered the blue chintz room to be prepared," replied the old lady, looking embarrassed. On which Mr. Hunter rang the bell himself, and commanded that the crimson satin suite of rooms should be instantly made ready.

"And have the point-lace toilet-cover put on the dressing-table," added Mrs. Hunter.

Honor perfectly comprehended that the change from the blue chintz room to the crimson satin suite was due to her own assumption of lofty dignity, and, finding it so successful, fully resolved never to lose sight of it.

The luncheon-bell now rang, and Mr. Hunter approached Honor, and offered her his arm with as profound a respect as he would have done to royalty itself; while she accepted it with an air of proud condescension, and walked through the train of powdered domestics as if she had been all her life accustomed to be surrounded by such.

"Is she always so distant, so proud-like?" whispered Mrs. Hunter in the ear of her son, as they walked to the dining-room.

"Generally," was the reply; "for, being descended from the Irish kings, she keeps up her dignity."

"But I never heard there were any kings in Ireland," whispered Mrs. Hunter; "I thought they had only a Lord Lieutenant."

But, before her son could explain, they had entered the *salle à manger*. The large dimensions of this room, the rich furniture, noble pictures, and splendid plate, struck Honor with admiration; but she carefully concealed this fact, and appeared neither surprised nor pleased, to the evident disappointment of Mr. and Mrs. Hunter. Her father-in-law having helped her to a little soup, and partaken of some himself, asked

for wine, and said, "Allow me, my dear daughter, to drink your health, and welcome you home."

Honor bowed graciously to him; and Mrs. Hunter and the servants exchanged glances of surprise as they remarked that they had never previously seen their master treat any lady with such respectful attention as he now did his daughter-in law. He pressed her to eat, selected the greatest dainties for her, insisted on her drinking half a glass of wine; to which she assented in a manner that proved she meant it to be considered a high favour, and, in short, conducted herself with such dignity that, although awed, her father and mother-in-law's consideration for her increased every moment. When the luncheon was over, they returned to the library. Honor observed Mr. Hunter draw from his pocket a slip of paper, which he tore into pieces, and then, having asked her to pardon him, he opened a drawer, and took a small book out of it, on which he wrote a few lines, which, having dried on his blotting-book, he walked up to Honor, and, having folded the paper, placed it in her hand. "Accept this, my first gift, my dear daughter,"

said he, "to make any little purchases you may require. For your *trousseau* and jewels, that must be my care and Mrs. Hunter's;" and he pressed his lips to the cheek of Honor.

"You are very good, sir," replied she, graciously, but proudly.

"I say, governor, I haven't made a bad choice, have I?" inquired Mr. James Hunter, no longer able to conceal his satisfaction at the evident admiration and respect with which his wife had inspired his parents.

"I never felt more pleased and satisfied with you, my son, than this day," answered his father, smiling, and nodding to Honor as an indication that *she* was the cause of this satisfaction; "but, to comp'ete my happiness, James, we must have whatever informality there may have been in your hasty marriage rectified as soon as possible. I will take immediate steps to have a special license obtained, and the ceremony performed by a dignitary of the church."

"Just as you like, governor; but all's right as it is, I assure you. Isn't it, Honor?"

"I defer on this point to the will of your father," replied Mrs. James; a mark of respect on her part, which, slight as it might

be deemed, was received by Mr. Hunter with undissembled pleasure; so true is it that small favours from the cold and proud generally are more valued than greater ones from persons always kind and amiable.

The immense fortune amassed by Mr. Hunter, large as it really was, was by report exaggerated into more than triple its actual amount; and, as the worship of gold continues to be as great in our time, if not greater than heretofore, the general belief in this enormous wealth had acquired for the Hunters a consideration seldom accorded to the highest rank, and never to the greatest merits, or virtues. A less worthy man would have been totally spoiled by the flattery and *homage* addressed to him, not only by the middle class, but by the very highest in the land. He was courted and welcomed wherever he went. His possessions, his movements, and his *fêtes*, were talked of and noticed in the papers; and, when he entered the House of Commons as one of its members, his advent there was hailed with acclamations. For some time, Mr. Hunter was puzzled to account for his own extraordinary popularity, more especially with the nobility;

but, as habit accustomed him to the daily proofs of it lavished on him by them, he was so pleased with the *effect*, that he ceased to trouble himself to inquire into the cause, and, like *parvenus* in general, remained what Nature meant him to be—a good-natured, kind-hearted man. He had now learned to receive the adulation offered to him by the great as a right, and repaid it with courteous and profuse hospitality.

Mrs. Hunter was less amiable than her husband. Denied the advantages of a good education, she was incorrigibly vulgar, and, like most vulgar persons, attached the highest importance to the notice of the magnates of the land. She had a shrewd suspicion that she owed this condescension on their part to the wealth of her husband, and not to any merit of her own; hence, she was piqued, even while pleased by it, and watched with a jealous eye every symptom that could imply a sense in the minds of her titled guests and hosts that she was only tolerated, and had no right to be among them. A glance exchanged, a half smile, a look of astonishment detected on their countenances, soured and angered her; and, to resent such marks of

disapprobation, she would assume all the airs of a *parvenue*, boast of her wealth, and insinuate that, if she and Mr. Hunter pleased, they might have the choice of three parts of the finest seats in England to expend a portion of their vast fortunes on, as dukes, marquises, and earls, were daily offering their castles, abbeys, and parks for sale to Mr. Hunter, who, having already two magnificent places in the country, and one smaller one, did not care to be troubled with any more.

The mistakes and blunders of Mrs. Hunter furnished a fertile field for the *mauvaises plaisanteries* of all her acquaintances. For one blunder really made by her, twenty were invented for her, and were circulated in society with a malicious pleasure by those whom her vulgarity and *brusquerie* had offended, and whose envy her boasted wealth had excited. Though well aware of the insincerity of her noble acquaintances, she could not dispense with the vain and puerile gratification their attentions afforded her. The truth was, she liked the flattery, while she in her secret heart despised the flatterers, and lost whatever good qualities she might originally have possessed, in the false position

in which she now found herself placed. Sometimes would Mrs. Hunter say to her husband, "Well, after all, my dear, these great lords and ladies are very much like other people. The only difference I find is, that they show greater attention to rich people than our old friends used to do."

"Because, having high birth and ancient titles, and their fortunes not always equalling their rank, they attach a greater value to wealth than we do, who, possessing it, appreciate more highly ancient lineage and high rank. People always are disposed to value what they have not."

"But, what can our wealth be to them? Can they hope that we intend to share it with them, Mr. Hunter?"

"They must be simple if they do, my dear. But a very rich man is always deemed a fortunate one, and people sometimes unconsciously, they know not why, are attracted around the fortunate."

"Do you remember when we used to read in the newspapers of an evening the *fêtes* and movements of dukes, duchesses, marchionesses, earls, and countesses, how grand we used to think they must be! We be-

lieved them as different, and as superior to ourselves, as champagne is to small-beer, little thinking we should ever sit down to table with them, and have them at our houses. But now that we have come to know them, and to be hand and glove with with them, as one may say, I smile to think in what an error we were,—how exactly like other people they are, and how totally unlike what we imagined them to be."

"I confess, notwithstanding, that I like them, my dear wife. They are so much more polite than our old acquaintances, and there is a great charm in politeness."

"They are too polite, I think, for their over-politeness reminds me of what my mother used to say, 'Always suspect a person who comes into the shop with polite speeches, to have an empty purse; those with well-filled ones know there's no occasion for fine words.' And what she so often said to me, comes into my head when I hear those grand lords and ladies inviting me, and flattering me, as if I conferred the greatest honour on them, for I suspect they have designs on my money."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The society of lords and ladies afforded much more pleasure to Mr. Hunter than to his wife, because he never attempted to analyze the motives that led to their marked attentions to him. He took the good offered, and repaid it in kind, willing to believe that those who showed such a preference for his company were as disinterested as he was. And he was not far wrong in this supposition; for, although many of the nobles with whom he associated might stand in need of a portion of his wealth, there was hardly one among them who would have dreamed of asking a loan from him, notwithstanding that they sought acquaintance with him solely on account of it. Strange and incomprehensible influence of money! He liked to be ad-

dressed by duchesses, and to be confidentially talked to by dukes, and, when he saw assembled around his hospitable board some of the noblest persons of both sexes in England, he felt pleased with himself and with all the world.

He had, like his wife, formed a more elevated notion of the great lords and ladies of the peerage. He fancied that dukes were more unbending, and that duchesses were a more stately and ceremonious race; that they maintained a greater distance towards persons of his own position, and by the dignity of their manner precluded the slightest approach to familiarity. But, when he found this fine porcelain of human nature resembled so strongly the homely earthenware to which he had hitherto been accustomed, he only smiled at his own mistake, and admitted that duchesses could be as pleasant and unaffected as any other ladies. The awe and profound respect which he had anticipated they must inspire in one of a grade so much lower than themselves, were gone; but the admiration for their gentleness of manner, elegance, and amiability was tenfold increased.

"I feel as much at ease conversing with one of those grand ladies," would he observe to his wife, "at my own table, as if I were a duke myself, or that she were only a plain Mrs. Tomkins, or Simkins, and I only remember her rank when I hear some one say, 'your grace.' I really believe that lords and ladies forget that they are lords and ladies when they are in company. Not like our old friends, the lord mayors and sheriffs and their wives, who seemed to me to be always thinking of their own imagined grandeur, and who looked as cross as possible if any one seemed for a moment to forget it. Do you remember after Sheriff Thompson was knighted, how offended his wife used to be if any one omitted saying, 'my lady' and 'your ladyship' at every word?"

But, although Mr. Hunter was highly pleased with the aristocratic dames he became acquainted with, he had not yet encountered the "fair ideal" of a duchess which he had formed to himself. "She must be tall, slight, and stately," said he, "with a delicate complexion, rather grave and silent, replying more by lofty bows, with now and then a condescending smile, than by words."

"Such was the notion which Mr. Hunter's fancy had formed of an aristocratic dame, and which hitherto he had sought in vain. He and his wife had made up their minds that their only son should marry a lady of rank. They cared not whether she brought a fortune with her, or not; for they had wealth sufficient for the indulgence of their utmost desires, and sagacity enough to be aware that a young lady of rank with a *fortune* would not be likely to marry Mr. James Hunter, or, if she did, might not be disposed to treat his parents with the respectful consideration to which they thought themselves entitled. "Let my future daughter-in-law bring nobility into the family, and I'll find wealth," said Mr. Hunter; and, with this sentiment, and the conviction that it would be carried out whenever he liked, he felt in no hurry to see his son married, thinking him too young and too wild to settle in life: an opinion fully shared by Mrs. Hunter.

Both parents positively idolized their son, while he, spoiled by their injudicious and weak indulgence, foolishly believed that it was accorded to him from a sense of his peculiar merit and superiority over them, and

also believed that he was fully justified in following his own inclinations without referring to theirs. The father had consented to his son's entering the army very much against his own views and wishes; but, he firmly resisted the project of his entering the Guards, on which Mr. James had set his mind, wisely thinking that London, or its environs, presented a bad school for a rich and naturally idle youth to begin his military career in, and in which he might acquire habits which might give a colour to his future destiny. "If he *must* be a soldier," said Mr. Hunter, "let him at least be safe out of the temptations of London, where so many young men get ruined before their reason is developed."

The —— regiment was selected by Mr. James Hunter because a schoolfellow of his had entered it; and, after having passed some time in various country quarters in England, where he had distinguished himself by his follies and extravagance, from the inevitable results of which the kindness and liberality of his too partial parents had always rescued him, he accompanied his regiment to Ireland. The elopement and marriage of Mr. James Hunter had occasioned great annoyance to

his father and mother. It frustrated all the projects so long formed by them for his alliance with some noble family; but, to his mother, it was still more objectionable than to his father, for she had, as we before alluded to, conceived a dislike to the Irish that would have rendered her peculiarly averse to receive as a daughter-in-law any young lady, however highly endowed, who happened to appertain to the "Emerald Isle." The good sense of her husband, who saw that as the mischief, as he termed it, was done, and could not be undone, it was better to make the best of it, and pardon the young pair, had conquered Mrs. Hunter's repugnance to receive her son's wife civilly, although, "as to ever liking an Irishwoman, that was," as she declared, "wholly out of the question;" and she "heartily pitied her poor dear James for his misfortune."

"What a fine, noble-looking creature she is!" said Mr. Hunter, the first moment he found himself alone with his wife, on the day of receiving the young pair. "She is precisely the sort of looking girl I should have chosen for him," added he, "and realizes exactly the notion I had formed of a

duchess. And her manner, too, how stately, how reserved! I declare I could have made more free with any duchess of our acquaintance than with my own daughter-in-law."

"She is very handsome, I am ready to admit, and does look very noble," replied Mrs. Hunter; "but, somehow or other, I feel more shy with her, more afraid of her, than I ever felt of any woman before. If you will believe me, my dear, I didn't feel half in such awe when I was first presented to her Majesty as when James led up his wife to me. I had made up my mind to give them a good lecture before I forgave them, but it went quite out of my head when I saw her standing proudly before me, with that cold stately look that seemed to say, 'Haven't I done you a great honour in marrying your son?' when I fully expected that she would plump down on her knees to ask my pardon for coming into our family without our leave or license."

"Hah! hah! hah!" exclaimed Mr. Hunter, bursting into a fit of laughter. "Why, to tell you the truth, I expected, like you, a blushing, frightened, poor girl, with her eyes full of tears, asking to be forgiven, and

whom, after a short reproof, I would have to raise from her knees and say I pardoned; when, to my surprise, and, I must add, to my satisfaction, I saw this handsome and grand looking creature looking at me as though she meant to say, 'I am ready to pardon you for having for a moment blamed your son for marrying me.'"

"I find by poor dear James that she is descended from the Irish kings; and this, I suppose, is the reason she looks so proud. But I never heard there were any kings in Ireland before. Did you, my dear?"

"Yes, yes, and I begin to have faith now that, notwithstanding their reign ended many centuries ago, their descendants still retain their dignity of air and manner."

"Did you observe that she never seemed to notice the rich furniture, fine pictures, and beautiful plate, any more than if she had been a queen, and used to such things all her life?"

"I did, my dear, and I liked her for it. I had, as you advised me, drawn a cheque for £300 to give her for pocket money, but I tore it up, and wrote her one for a £1,000."

"The only thing I'm afraid of is, that she'll always keep me in awe. I feel that I couldn't give her a word of advice, or tell her my mind, were it ever so; she looks so cold and stately, and I can plainly see poor dear James is as much afraid of her as I am."

"So much the better, my dear, for it will prevent disagreements. Let her alone. Be polite to her, and I am sure she will be the same to you."

"But it's very disagreeable, Mr. Hunter, so it is, to be afraid-like of one's own daughter-in-law; especially when she brings no fortune, and elopes with one's only son, who might have married a duke's daughter."

"I assure you, my dear, that the only thing that surprises me is, her ever condescending to elope with any man, were he even a king, instead of our son, James."

"Surely, Mr. Hunter, you are not going to undervalue our only child, our son and heir,—and all for a proud Irish princess, who, after all, is no princess at all?"

"Not at all, my dear, I never thought so highly of James as since I have seen his wife. And now we must give orders to the

best mercers, milliners, jewellers, and all the rest of them, to send their finest goods. We have a real diamond of great value in our possession, and we must take care that it be properly set. Spare no expense, Mrs. Hunter, but let our daughter-in-law have everything fit for a duchess. I'll choose the jewels myself."

"What do you think, Honor, of the governor and the old girl?" inquired Mr. James Hunter, when he found himself *tête-à-tête* with his bride.

"Just what you led me to expect. They have behaved very well; and, that they may continue to do so, I must maintain my own dignity."

"Come, come, Honor, all that's very well to *them*, but you must not be always on your high horse with me. Hang me, if I can believe you're the same girl I ran off with so short a time ago; when you were such a lively devil-may-care sort of a creature, and used to make me half split my sides with laughing. Now, you are like a queen before her subjects, and I don't know what to say, you look so very dignified. It's all well enough to act the grand with the old folk,

but with one's own husband it really is ridiculous; so let you and I play into each other's hands, Honor, and all will go on well. For how much was the cheque the governor gave you? I dare be sworn, it was for a large amount. Will you share it with me?"

"I have not looked at it," replied Honor, with an air of great dignity, drawing it forth, and handing it to him.

"What! a thousand pounds! By Jove, the governor has come down handsomely. I did not imagine it had been above two or three hundred."

"Let me have £300 to send my mother, and you may keep the rest."

"Well, that's devilish good-natured of you, I must say, Honor; but I won't take your money from you. There!" and he returned the cheque, "take it. I see you have already found the road to the governor's heart, which leads direct to his purse; so you may have whatever you like from him, if you play your cards well."

"I will play no cards," observed Mrs. James Hunter proudly, if not sternly. "I respect myself too much to have recourse to any unworthy means; and, were I disposed

to adopt any such, the liberal conduct of your father towards me would wholly preclude it."

"And who wants you to take unworthy means? And who ever thinks that taking advantage of a kind old governor, who happens to be one's father, or father-in-law, is an unworthy measure, I should like to know?"

"*I* think so, and that is quite sufficient for me. I shall never consult others on points of honour."

"Why, to hear you talk, Honor, one might imagine that I was a schoolboy, and you my governess, or preceptor, who had to lecture me. Hang me, if I know what to make of you; you are so stern and stuck up of late." And off walked the discomfited husband, leaving his stately wife fully determined to maintain her dignity in a family where she plainly saw the permission on her part of any infringement of it would expose her to disagreeable consequences.

The marriage-ceremony, according to the English law, was solemnized in a few days after, with as much pomp as was admissible where a certain degree of privacy was necessary; and, before it was celebrated, Mr. Hunter, senior, had a very liberal marriage

settlement drawn up in favour of his daughter-in-law, securing her, and any offspring to which she might hereafter give birth, most ample provisions. Honor's politeness towards her husband and his parents was invariable; but, while it left them nothing to complain of in their ordinary intercourse, it never relaxed into that sociability and confidence which form so great a charm in domestic life. Her beauty and dignified demeanour had made such a favourable impression on Mr. Hunter, senior, that he was disposed to excuse, if not to overlook, the want of cordiality which sometimes struck him in his daughter-in-law. "It's her way," would he sometimes say, in reply to the frequent complaints of his wife on this point. "Some persons are naturally cold and formal in their manners, and can't help it; and you must see, my dear, that, if she never allows a liberty, she never takes one."

"But she positively freezes me by her coldness. I always heard that the Irish are a warm-hearted people."

"Warm hearts are very apt to be accompanied by warm tempers, my dear, which are very disagreeable things to deal with, I can

assure you; and we ought to rejoice that Mrs. James Hunter bears no more resemblance in temper than in person to the only specimen of an Irishwoman you had previously known, namely, the Irish kitchen-maid, of whom you had such a dread and horror."

"Well, on the whole, I don't know if I wouldn't rather have have had to deal with a warm temper, provided there was a warm heart with it, than with such a very cold and stately woman as my son's wife. Nothing seems to please, or surprise her."

"Which is a proof of her high breeding, my dear. You never see great people surprised at anything."

"But I don't admit that she *is* a great person, though she is descended from Irish kings; for, when I told Lady Mellborough so the other day, she positively laughed outright, and made a joke of it! But, surely, even if she were a great person, the moment she became our son's wife she should leave off her grand airs with us, instead of making me feel that I am no longer at home in my own house, while a stuck-up, icy-looking

lady sits like a queen on a court-day before me."

"She has, I must admit, a very queenly air, and I notice that every one who sees her is struck by it. I have no doubt she'll make James much more steady and reasonable."

"Poor, dear fellow! I can plainly see he is afraid of her, which he never was of me, who am his mother."

CHAPTER XX.

PAINFUL was the awaking of Grace O'Neill the morning after the parting between her and Mordant. A deep sense of sorrow oppressed her so strongly that, when she opened her eyes for a moment, she closed them again as if to shut out some distressing object. "Have I had a painful dream," thought Grace, "or is it, indeed, true that we have parted for ever?" And sharp was the pang when memory told her that it was no dream which had inflicted such a heavy weight of sorrow on her heart. She recalled every look, every word of his, on the previous night. "That he felt the parting acutely, there can be no doubt," thought she; "his voice, his agitation, proved it. But, alas! not a word passed his

lips that indicated his intention of ever coming here again, and, did he believe such a thing possible, would he not have referred to it? And now, hour after hour, days, weeks, months, and years—should I continue to bear this load of life so long—may roll on without any hope to cheer this desolate heart. I knew not, until the moment of trial came, how hard would be the task of supporting his absence, of seeing mornings dawn and nights set in, without a hope of beholding or even hearing from him;" and tears stole down her cheeks. "But I must not give way to unavailing regret," thought Grace. "I have duties to fulfil—precious, sacred ones; the peace of my dear grandmother must not be exposed to the trial of witnessing my unhappiness. I owe it to her, to myself, to bear up against this heavy sorrow; and a sense of duty, with the aid of Heaven, will support me through it."

Grace arose, removed with care every trace of tears from her eyes, and was already dressed when her attendant entered her chamber. It was a great delight to her that that person knew nothing of her indisposition on the preceding night—it spared her

from all inquiries; and, having learned that her grandmother was awake, she went to bid her good morrow. Delighted by this courageous effort on the part of her darling, and well aware of how much it must have cost her, the Countess O'Neill pressed her to her heart with a tenderness no words could express; and, though no reference was made to the cause of Grace's recent illness, the minds of both were occupied by it."

"She's a noble creature, and has all the high courage of her grandfather," thought Patrick O'Donohough to himself, when he waited on the ladies at breakfast, and marked the varying colour on the cheek of Grace. "Pride is a fine thing in woman," thought Patrick. "There is nothing better for enabling her to conceal her feelings. Sure it is like some of the false armour I have seen, which, though it could not prevent a wound, concealed it. I am sure she'd die rather than let any one know what's passing in her heart; and I hope that the effort to hide her grief will in time conquer it. And that poor gentleman, Captain Mordant, how sorrowful I left him! I was thinking that if she knew how well he loves

her, and why he could not propose, it might satisfy her pride, and so take the sting out of her wound, as extracting splinters which irritate, helps to cure bodily wounds. But, then, such is the tenderness and pity of her noble heart, that, were she to know the sufferings of his, she might be still more unhappy, and it would keep alive an affection which, for her peace, must be subdued. Well, all is in the hands of God; and if, as *the* great Book said, A sparrow cannot fall without *His* will, may we not hope that *He* will not let a heart like hers break, but, in *His* own time and way, bind up this bruised reed?"

The frequency of Captain Mordant's visits to the Countess O'Neill's had not failed to draw attention. They were accounted for in the little world of —— by a supposition of his attachment to her grand-daughter, and a belief that it must lead to a marriage. Youthful and inexperienced as was Grace, she had noticed various symptoms of this belief in her friends and acquaintances; hence, she naturally concluded that, when Mordant left, the manner in which she should bear his absence would become a

subject of inquiry among them. She knew that a shade less of colour in her cheeks, or any other indication of decreased health or gaiety, would evidently be attributed to a disappointment of the heart; and from such a supposition her pride and delicacy equally revolted.

To avoid the possibility of this, she determined, whatever the effort might cost her, to conceal, if she could not surmount, her chagrin. She took more exercise than before in the garden, that her cheeks should not grow pale; and, although not physiologist enough to be aware of the fact that the same exercise which, by circulating the blood in her veins, sent a brighter tint to her cheek, would increase her animal spirits, she found that it produced this effect, and consequently she had much less trouble in *appearing* as cheerful as before she knew Mordant, than she had anticipated. She thought of him often, it is true, and with sadness, but she did not wholly abandon herself to regret. She sought in constant occupation a refuge from melancholy thoughts, and experienced the truth of the adage, that grief has less chance of vanquishing the busy than the idle.

The approbation of her beloved grandmother, demonstrated by a thousand nameless proofs of affection, stimulated her to a continuance in her wise resolve not to give way to her feelings; and the keenest vigilance of the most curious observer could discover nothing in her appearance or manner to justify a suspicion that her affections were deeply, irrevocably engaged, and without a hope of sharing the destiny of him who had won them. She attended, as one of the bridesmaids, the marriage of the second Miss Fitzgerald with Mr. Mac Vigors, with an aspect as cheerful as she had worn on the previous wedding of Lady Travers, and defeated the curiosity of all those who, "wondered how Miss O'Neill would support the departure of Captain Mordant, who devoted all his time and attention to her just as if there were no other young ladies in the place?"

The wedding of the second sister of the Fitzgerald family so closely resembled that of the first, that we spare our readers the recapitulation. Mr. Mac Vigors, possessing an equal fortune with Sir Henry Travers, was equally liberal with the Baronet in making settlements; and his father-in-law elect de-

termined that the festivities given in honour of his nuptials should be on a no less extensive scale. The same number of guests and dishes, and the same number of toasts, marked the festival. The only difference was, that the bridegroom, on the present occasion, warned by the example of his predecessor, refrained from making an absurd speech, and contented himself with thanking those who drank his health, and by hoping to meet them often in his own house.

In a few days after the Countess O'Neill received a letter from Captain Mordant, in which, as he declared to his humble friend, Patrick O'Donohough, he would do, he revealed to her not only the precise state of his heart, but all the difficulties of his position; and, while blaming himself for his culpable folly in exposing himself to the dangerous pleasure of cultivating an intimacy with one whom to know must be to love, he implored forgiveness in consideration that he was daily, hourly, expiating his fault by the deep chagrin he was undergoing in consequence. The Countess deliberated some time whether or not she should show the letter to Grace; but reflection taught her that the

wisest course to pursue would be not to name it; and, having acknowledged its receipt, she requested that Mordant would write to her no more, and concluded by wishing him every happiness. "We are never too old to acquire wisdom by experience," thought the Countess O'Neill; "and never again will I risk the happiness of my darling by exposing her to the constant society of any man, however amiable and commendable. That she has escaped unscathed is, indeed, a most fortunate event, for which I can never be sufficiently grateful, for it was by my weakness and want of knowledge of the world that she was placed in danger."

But, although Grace O'Neill struggled as far as those of her age and sex were ever capable of doing, the barbed arrow of disappointed affection still rankled at her heart, and often was her pillow bedewed with tears as the image of Mordant presented itself in the silence of night. "Was she still remembered? Did *he* turn with tenderness to her image, as she so frequently did to his?" were questions which often occurred to her. She would recall his looks, his words, with a vividness that almost startled her, and ask

herself if she should thus ever bear him in her heart?

The officers of the regiment which replaced that of Mordant were now receiving all the civilities that had been offered to their predecessors. One regiment, in the opinion of the society of —— and its neighbourhood, was just as good as another, and the marriage of Honor O'Flaherty had awakened hopes in the breasts of youthful belles and their mammas that the new officers might not leave —— without taking away at least one or two of the beauties. The Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter were among the few who viewed with perfect indifference the arrival of the beaux of the —— Regiment. The sound of the military band brought, as before, many a pretty face to the windows of the houses, and many were the coquettish glances shot forth from blue, grey, and hazel eyes at the good-looking young officers who paraded the streets in search of the beauties in which the town of —— was, and with truth, reported to be so rich.

"I must call on the colonel of this new regiment," said Sir Geoffrey Fitzgerald to his better half.

"Do you think it necessary, my dear, now that we have no longer daughters to marry?"

"It's always necessary to show attention to the English, in order to maintain the character of poor Ireland for hospitality, the sole virtue for which they are disposed to give us credit."

"But the two weddings have occasioned considerable expense, and we really require to retrench a little, Sir Geoffrey."

"That may be; but you must remember that, in the absence of the nobility here, I have always been looked up to as the person who was to take the lead in calling on and inviting the officers. To decline doing so now, would be like abdicating the position accorded me by my neighbours, and I suppose you would not like me to do this? Travers, though he is our son-in-law, is not competent to take my place, so I must not allow it to become dormant."

"But champagne and claret are very dear, Sir Geoffrey, and the two weddings have greatly diminished the stock in your cellar, as you told me the other day."

"True enough; but isn't there a new wine-merchant set up at Waterford, who wrote to

me a week ago to solicit the honour of my patronage, and can't I replenish my stock on long credit?"

"But long credit becomes so expensive in the end, my dear Sir Geoffrey."

"How can I help that? Short credit won't suit my means, and so I must seek long; for, with the long credit, something may always turn up before the day of payment comes."

"But what *can* turn up for us?"

"Mayn't our son marry an heiress, and with her fortune clear off all the incumbrances, and set us at our ease?"

"This is a contingency not to be relied on, Sir Geoffrey. He may take it into his head to marry a poor wife instead of a rich one, and what should we do, then?"

"He wouldn't be so unfeeling, Lady Fitzgerald. No, no, I know Tom better: he'll either join me to cut off the entail, or he'll marry an heiress; so it's no use bothering ourselves about our affairs."

"You are always so sanguine."

"And you so desponding, except when you wanted to go to England."

"That was because I hoped to get our daughters married there."

"But now we *have* got them married, and without having to come down with any money, too, we have a right to give ourselves some little enjoyment. None are within our reach here, except giving and taking good dinners. We can't get if we don't give, and, though it may make some few hundreds of pounds' difference in our expenses at the end of the year, it will not be half as much as a season in London would cost us, so that, on the whole, we shall be gainers."

The wine-merchant at Waterford was written to, to furnish a fresh stock of champagne and claret, with a promise that, if it was found to be of a superior quality, Sir Geoffrey would recommend the wines to his friends.

"How strange it is!" thought Lady Fitzgerald, "that any piece of good fortune that occurs to us—and Heaven knows such occurrences are 'few and far between,'—furnishes excuses to my husband for breaking into some new extravagance. The marriages of my daughters, by getting rid of a certain expense, will induce Sir Geoffrey to launch into a new one, and the giving up going to England will lead to his expending double

the usual sum at home. It reminds me of poor Sir Philip Dandeville, who took to drinking two bottles of champagne a day at Paris, where he went to economize, because, as he alleged, they cost no more than one in England used to do, and gave dinners of eight every day, because a dinner to four in London amounted to the same sum."

The worthy Baronet of Ballymacross Castle found some of the senior officers of the new regiment so entirely to his taste, and they found his wine so much to theirs, that a mutual good understanding was soon established between them. It is true that they voted him an "Irish bore," and a "proser," but, nevertheless, the dinners he gave were too good to be slighted; so they continued to honour him with their company at least once or twice a week—a favour which rendered the extension of their host's patronage to the new wine-merchant at Waterford positively necessary, justifying the prediction of Lady Fitzgerald as to his increased expenditure, based on the fact of his having so well married his daughters. Whenever she ventured a word of remonstrance, she was told that the house was so dull since his girls had

left it, that, to keep him from an attack of the blue devils, he was compelled to have cheerful society around him, and, if good wine and plenty of it was the most successful bait for catching dry fishes, it must not be spared. "Then they are such devilish jolly fellows," would Sir Geoffrey say, "that I think their company quite a godsend in such a dull neighbourhood."

END OF VOL. II.

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